

# **CULTURAL STRATEGY**

**2003 - 2008**

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# **1. WHY HAVE A CULTURAL STRATEGY?**

The Government, through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (DCMS) is expecting Local Authorities to develop and produce a Cultural Strategy by the end of 2002. DCMS require these strategies to consider those areas of cultural activity that fall within their area of work – namely, arts sports, libraries, museums, heritage, archaeology, archives, architecture, crafts, children's play, parks, tourism, countryside recreation and creative businesses. The strategies also need to address the value dimensions of culture – relationships, shared memories and experiences, diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds, standards, and what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

The Best Value Performance Indicator (BV114a) measures the process by which the Cultural Strategy is established. The achievement and delivery of the objectives and actions will be monitored by the Leicestershire Cultural Strategy Forum, representing the partnership of local authorities and the voluntary, private and other sectors.

With this in mind, cultural strategies are important documents that offer opportunities for all sectors of Leicestershire's communities to have access to sustainable and relevant forms of cultural provision and expression.

Essentially the Cultural Strategy is the first stage of the business planning process for organisations and services represented within the defined scope of culture and it should be seen as the catalyst to trigger investment for specific future development programmes.

The Strategy will be a county-wide document supported at the next stage by a detailed action plan at both countywide and local levels. District and Borough Councils will be responsible for taking forward the local action plans. The overall Strategy is required to be broad in scope and inclusive, a key document supported by (separate) action plans which will be developed by the Cultural Strategy Forum and others, to meet the challenges in the document. The Forum is an informal network of representatives from the County Council, District Councils and key bodies from the cultural sector who will co-ordinate, monitor and oversee the implementation of the Strategy, chaired by the County Council.

A Cultural Strategy Partnership for Leicestershire, including representatives from all of the Borough and District Councils and across the range of County Council departments, has met regularly to develop this strategy since 2000.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Leicestershire is a diverse, predominantly rural county, with attractive market towns and other urban centres. The county has established traditions surrounding sport, cuisine, equestrianism and industries such as textiles, coal mining, quarrying and engineering. Libraries, community centres, educational organisations and museums play an important part in the delivery of lifelong learning and capturing the essence of Leicestershire's rich and diverse heritage. Culturally, more can be achieved through a partnership approach to the provision of activities and the promotion of what Leicestershire has to offer its residents, investors and visitors. The creative industries are growing in importance in the county, and more needs to be done to ensure that their presence and growth has an economic and cultural impact on the county as a whole.

Consultation has revealed that the majority of residents are very proud of the rural beauty of the County, the National Forest and the Grand Union Canal, feel that culture has a positive role to play in improving community spirit, and enjoy festivals, the arts and local markets. Through a Citizen's Forum, consultation with key providers and stakeholders, and interested individuals, four themes were identified to underpin the Cultural Strategy. These are: Strengthening Communities, Celebrating Leicestershire, Improving Lifestyles and Health and Building a Cultural and Creative Economy.

The Cultural Strategy identifies a range of strategic aims as challenges set to identify or improve the potential for enhancing the quality of life in Leicestershire and providing opportunities to involve as many people as possible. In particular, young people and those for whom access may be difficult are the focus of many of the challenges, and action plans will be developed with specific and measurable targets by service providers, often in partnership, to work towards those aims being met during the life of the Strategy.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

#### **3a) WIDER STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

A wide range of material from national to local organisations has been researched to ensure that the Cultural Strategy is linked to relevant current strategies and plans, and other local documents that have a cultural remit. Examples of the range include Leicestershire's Education Development Plan and 'All Our Futures' Creativity Culture and Education (DCMS and DfEE).

Policy auditing has been carried out rigorously during the development of this strategy, to supplement, but not replace our consultation with the public.

##### *The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)*

This strategy has taken government guidelines provided by the DCMS as the framework that has been developed to reflect local circumstances, agenda and interests. It also reflects the basic processes, and the measures that are put in place to implement, monitor and review the strategy. This is intended to ensure that the strategy will score highly in Best Value performance evaluation and provide a recognised basis for external funding agencies.

##### *The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*

Cultural provision often depends on a strong environmental infrastructure, from transport to effective planning regulations. We have followed the Government department guidelines to ensure we interact with its primary aims.

##### *Regional Assembly: Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS)*

The objectives and challenges of Leicestershire's Cultural Strategy will connect with the Integrated Regional Strategy objectives, for example, to maximise the contribution of arts culture, heritage, media and sport to enhance the quality of life (SO4).

##### *East Midlands Regional Cultural Consortium: Time for Culture*

EMCC is the regional 'voice' for culture in the East Midlands. In 2001 'Time For Culture', the Cultural Strategy for the East Midlands, was launched.

Our strategy will act as a complement to Time for Culture – offering a distinctive, Leicestershire focus. We have supported Time for Culture by interpreting its regional vision for the people of Leicestershire.

##### *Regional Organisations*

In order to ensure that this Strategy is relevant to, and both informs and is informed by regional need, a number of regional agencies have given invaluable advice regarding the strategy, namely Arts Council of England (East Midlands), East Midlands Development Agency, Sport England, (East

Midlands), East Midlands Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Heart of England Tourist Board, English Heritage (East Midlands).

*Achieving Excellence for Leicestershire: Leicestershire's Community Strategy*

Leicestershire's Community Strategy is based upon three overarching themes:

Leicestershire: a county to be proud of

Leicestershire: where there are quality services for all

Young people: Leicestershire's future.

There are connections between the Community Strategy and the Cultural Strategy:

For example:

<b>Community Strategy</b>	<b>Cultural Strategy</b>
A positive image for Leicestershire	Celebrating Leicestershire through culture
A strong economy, with quality job opportunities and skills for the future	Building a creative economy
Safe roads, with a strong transport system that enables peoples to access key services when they want <i>and</i> access to be improved to all services and facilities	Develop accessibility to the widest range of cultural opportunities <i>and</i> assure access for all to leisure facilities
Thriving market towns and village centres – and high quality built areas	Revitalise market towns and work towards creating vital villages through culture
Strong communities where people feel that they have a say in their future	Strengthening communities – encourage greater access and cohesion through culture
Healthy communities where people look after themselves and each other <i>and</i> fair communities where everyone can achieve their potential	Improving lifestyles and health
The needs and aspirations of young people to be identified and addressed	Work with agencies to develop cultural activities to ensure that young people have opportunities to enjoy themselves, participate, develop skills and nurture talents

### **3b) CONSULTATION**

Appendix 2 details the consultation processes used to achieve the final Strategy, according to DCMS guidelines, the Best Value requirements and Corporate Guidelines.

## **4. STRATEGY**

### **4a) STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

- To ensure culture is seen as an essential component in Local Authority practices.
- To emphasise the importance of culture as a binding force that develops communities and encourages a sense of citizenship.
- To build healthy cultural partnerships at local, regional, national and international levels to secure a sustainable cultural future for Leicestershire.
- To strive for everyone to participate in cultural life of the county and for cultural provision to embrace issues of equality and access.
- To contribute to a vibrant regional economy based on culture and creativity and to work towards creating vital market towns and local communities.
- To enable cultural talent to shine.
- To engender respect and mutual understanding of global and local communities through culture.

## 4b) STRATEGIC AIMS

The strategic aims are grouped within the four themes of the Cultural Strategy, viz:

**Strengthening Communities**  
**Improving Lifestyles and Health**  
**Celebrating Leicestershire**  
**Building a Creative Economy.**

Consultation revealed a number of challenges which need to be addressed in order for culture in Leicestershire to be integrated into the fabric of the county's economic, social and environmental life. The strategic aims are represented through these Challenges and will be the focus of district-led action planning in order to respond to changes in society and local cultural need.

Within each theme, a number of challenges are identified. In some cases the challenges, whilst they sit within one theme, are not exclusive to it and may also support other themes.

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

*Culture is the glue that holds communities together<sup>1</sup>*

Culture has an enormous impact in developing and sustaining communities. With this in mind, in Leicestershire we need to ensure that everyone and all communities have access to relevant forms of cultural provision. We need to support initiatives which can encourage people to take an active role in society. We need to address groups and individuals who, in some areas of the county, suffer from isolation. Opportunities to participate in cultural activities can minimise incidents of crime and disorder. Consultation revealed that there should be more opportunities to celebrate young people's cultural endeavours, and ensuring the elderly have access to cultural activities.

### STRATEGIC AIMS

- Support the use of museums, archives and libraries as active centres for participatory use by all communities – and for developing lifelong formal and informal learning.
- Explore opportunities for developing the use of schools, village halls, pubs and other social meeting places for cultural activity and events.
- Work together to facilitate access for the elderly to cultural activities.

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<sup>1</sup> North West Cultural Consortium 2000

- Play a positive role in cultural programmes within excluded communities – particularly in isolated areas, and areas of economic and social decline.
- Work with agencies to develop cultural activities to ensure that young people have opportunities to enjoy themselves, participate, develop skills and nurture talents.
- Encourage more involvement in community heritage schemes at the local level.
- Provide more support to encourage volunteers in the cultural sector.
- Develop more community use of allotments – including young people’s schemes and providing habitats for wildlife.
- Develop more community and cultural use of public spaces.
- Provide more opportunities for young people’s leisure interests – such as adventure style sports – via touring schemes, competitions (such as the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Youth Games).
- Ensure that the social benefits of cultural activity are promoted within crime and disorder action planning.
- Chart the success of cultural aspirations in Leicestershire village appraisals.
- Develop accessibility to the widest possible range of cultural opportunities – including access to professional cultural activity (such as touring arts and cinema schemes).
- Seek opportunities for lively local centres through a diverse range of activities that are based on local needs, knowledge and expertise.

## **CASE STUDIES**

The Open Museum

Centre Stage Rural Touring Scheme

Sileby Village Appraisal

Charnwood Arts

Hinckley and Bosworth Rural Cultural Project

Contour and Cream

Heritage Watch

Environmental Improvement through SHIRE Grants

## **CELEBRATING LEICESTERSHIRE**

Culture and creativity are important, though often intangible, elements in our quality of life. They are central to economic growth and community development. Culture makes places distinctive. Up until the 1980's, places were often branded through association with their products. In Leicestershire, a diverse range of products were generated – from coal production in the north west, to corsetry and shoes in the south and east, (photos) and our preserved built environment is testament to this industrial heritage. Nowadays however, we rarely look upon a location as merely a place where products are made, but see the location as the product itself.

In this respect our Cultural Strategy will develop, alongside the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP), other agencies and the tourism sector, a workable image and brand to celebrate Leicestershire. We need to ensure Leicestershire is a county of which to be proud. We need to ensure Leicestershire's culture has international significance where appropriate, and, conversely, is identified with local communities themselves. Although Celebrating Leicestershire is not all about tourism, places with strong cultural provision do attract more visitors, enable local businesses to associate and benefit, and local residents benefit from a sense of community pride, cultural respect and enjoyment.

The historic environment is a key part of regeneration schemes, building on the Historic Environment Regeneration Schemes (HERS) in Lutterworth, Hinckley, Ashby de la Zouch, and the new use of historic buildings for cultural activities. It is also important to ensure good quality modern architecture, housing and open spaces as a complement to the historic development.

It is important to support and champion cultural ambassadors from every walk of life, to encourage greater appreciation, particularly among young people, in sporting and media icons and heroes. Leicestershire is rich in culture, and this is a wealth which can be shared both nationally and internationally. Leicestershire can make valuable contributions regionally and nationally and it is important for long term sustainability that we have key roles in such initiatives as 'Renaissance' for museums and the Archives Task Force.

We need to ensure that our cultural assets are preserved and developed for the enjoyment of future generations, and to ensure that towns, villages and more isolated monuments and buildings are developed sustainably for the communities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond. We need to find better ways of promoting local products – from foodstuffs to fashion design and to ensure Leicestershire's identity is enhanced through its cultural provision. Leicestershire now needs to build on its success so far to become renowned as a truly cultural county.

### **STRATEGIC AIMS**

- Make sure Leicestershire has regional, national and international impact as a vibrant cultural county – build international links and partnerships to build on shared heritages.

- Ensure that Leicestershire's rich inheritance and contemporary culture are central to its external image, and are included in tourism initiatives.
- Conserve, enhance and promote Leicestershire's unique archive and object based history, landscape, ecology, built heritage and innovative architecture.
- Promote and protect Leicestershire's parks, gardens, open spaces, playing fields and rural assets to visitors and residents.
- Develop a county-wide network of festivals and events that celebrate Leicestershire's cultural diversity in its broadest sense.
- Include cultural dimensions in county promotional materials.
- Involve local people in identifying and preserving what is special and important.
- Identify, support and promote local 'champions' in the broad scope of cultural activity – including formalising roles for cultural 'ambassadors' from every walk of life.
- Recognise and celebrate individual and community achievements in the fields of culture.
- Promote 'flagship' provision to show Leicestershire's regional and national contributions.
- Reinvigorate town twinning and European partnerships for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Ensure sports and arts are included in tourism initiatives.
- Develop Leicestershire's culture and build on current assets to ensure Leicestershire has a national and international reputation for its cultural provision

## **CASE STUDIES**

Bosworth Battlefield

County of the Horse

Farmers' Markets

Leicestershire Sports

BBC Radio Leicester

## **IMPROVING LIFESTYLES AND HEALTH**

Culture, health and wellbeing are closely linked – and cultural activities and provision play an important part in our quality of life. In order for culture to meet health and lifestyle needs we must ensure that everybody can access relevant cultural provision. Physical activities such as sport and outdoor recreation are very important, as are learning opportunities and participation in the arts and non-physical activities.

Health, just like culture, is broadly defined, and a truly rounded interpretation includes spiritual, intellectual, emotional as well as physical health.

Leicestershire Community Colleges are unique in what they offer to local communities (adult and young people's learning opportunities). Lifelong learning is at the very heart of Community Colleges, such as Countesthorpe College, which has a history of working with communities that spans over 40 years – developing and providing for lifelong learning, sports and arts provision, youth work and community development.

Cultural providers will need to ensure that their facilities and services have a positive impact on improving physical, emotional and mental health, and to improve information on how their work can help. In certain cases such activities will need to be brought to discrete groups such as children in care, and the frail elderly. Disability must not be seen as a barrier to cultural fulfilment. Libraries provide potential to meet a wide range of interests and aptitudes for all ages, enhancing lifelong learning, access to education and giving pleasure and fulfilment.

The relationship between culture and health therefore can be described as offering a sense of wellbeing, something for everyone; and the opportunity to take part in life to the full.

### **STRATEGIC AIMS**

- Develop opportunities for local people to benefit from and help conserve the natural environment and green spaces – including playing fields especially around towns.
- Incorporate health agencies and initiatives into cultural planning (such as GP referral schemes).
- Explore the effects of lifelong learning opportunities on intellectual and physical health.
- Encourage access for all to leisure facilities and their outreach programmes.
- Develop opportunities to socialise, and ease isolation through cultural programmes.

- Improve rights of way and access in rural areas for cycling, riding and walking.
- Consider ways, and work with others, to address the danger, noise and intrusion of traffic in tranquil areas.
- Encourage greater access to children's leisure facilities and activities.
- Seek measures to preserve ambience within the built environment, providing spaces for quiet contemplation and for recreation and play.
- Encourage amateur sports, heritage and arts organisations to work in partnership to enhance health, learning and wellbeing through culture.

### **CASE STUDIES**

GREAT: County Cricket Club study centre

Broughton Astley Riding for the Disabled

Arts and Technology Partnership

Paintings in Hospitals

Zygote

# **BUILDING A CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECONOMY**

With the decline of traditional manufacturing as a source of wealth, and with developments in new communications technology, the creative industries are becoming increasingly important to the economy of Leicestershire. The creative industries need to be encouraged and supported and the potential of the creative industries developed through partnerships, in particular through work with the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP).

This will mean those creative businesses in Leicestershire based around sole traders, micro business and SME's may need specialist training and development in order to help them gain recognition and further opportunities. Mentoring schemes for small businesses and new start ups, and provision of quality working spaces and studios, may help retain new graduates every year in Leicestershire.

In Leicestershire, the majority of creative industries are based around graphic design and individual artists/makers.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing sector of media technology in the county (enhanced by media technology courses at De Montfort University, and the existence of global computer games designers such as Rare – who are now owned by Microsoft, and developed the popular game Donkey Kong). However, all three areas of activity need to be developed, supported and celebrated in order to meet the challenges. Links will also need to be made with regional agencies and the Cultural Quarter in Leicester in order to keep and develop a healthy and vibrant creative industry sector, not least of which is offering career development opportunities for young people, and continuing professional development for emerging and existing businesses.

## **STRATEGIC AIMS**

- Build upon strengths in media technology fields in the county in forward planning and strategic development.
- Support the growth of cultural businesses in market towns, rural districts and urban areas.
- Work with economic agencies to raise the level of awareness of, and interest in, creative and cultural industries.
- Work with universities to develop policies for retaining graduates and young entrepreneurs in the sector.
- Capitalise further on the natural advantages of location and ease of communications on the cultural heritage of the county, and on Leicestershire's strong reputation for design, technology and art/crafts.

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<sup>2</sup> Comedia Creative Industries Pathfinder Report 2002

- Gather data and carry out further research into the nature, health and needs analysis of the sector – including training needs and training availability in the region.
- Consider how rural businesses in the cultural sector can receive access to business support and new technologies, while allowing them to benefit from the natural advantages of a rural location.
- Encourage meaningful public/private sector partnerships to sustain creative and cultural enterprise in the county.
- Support initiatives for more outlets for the public to buy from local artists and makers – such as open studios and the Ferrers Centre near Ashby de la Zouch.

### **CASE STUDIES**

Cooke Optics

Rachel Barnett

Stocks Taylor Benson

Fashion Gallery

## LEICESTERSHIRE'S PROFILE

Leicestershire is a county of diverse communities and cultures in the centre of England: It rings the City of Leicester and borders onto the counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. A major strength of Leicestershire is its central location with easy access to the rest of Great Britain, and beyond. The population of Leicestershire (2000<sup>3</sup>) is 600,640 covering an area of 2,083 square kilometres, across seven district and borough councils. (MAP)

The population is as follows:

Charnwood	152,120
Hinckley and Bosworth	97,880
North West Leicestershire	86,350
Oadby and Wigston	52,160
Melton	47,540
Harborough	76,920
Blaby	87,670

The main towns are Loughborough ( 56,800 population) Hinckley (45,400) Coalville (33,100) and Wigston (32,300). The remaining urban areas and towns each have a population of less than 30,000 people, with the rest of the population residing in the rural areas. Geographically, the largest district is Harborough, and in contrast, the smallest is Oadby and Wigston – however Oadby and Wigston is also the most heavily populated. The most sparsely populated district is Melton with 47,540 people throughout the district. The youngest population is in Blaby, where more than 6% of the residents are aged under five, whilst the oldest population is in Oadby and Wigston. The most ethnically diverse communities are also based in Oadby and Wigston and Charnwood.<sup>4</sup>

A Leicestershire village, Fenny Drayton, in the south west of the county is hailed as the epicentre of England - suggesting that Leicestershire is at the very heart of the country.

The county rings the city of Leicester, whose cultural strategy: 'Diverse City' sets out the case for its multicultural and major urban hub. Leicestershire's strategy, although separate from 'Diverse City', shows that certain challenges in Diverse City are paralleled in Leicestershire, from a countywide perspective.

The county has exceptional transport links – and is only an hour away from London by train. In the north west of the county lies East Midlands Airport. (Photo) Opened in 1965, the airport was originally managed in partnership between neighbouring local authorities. The airport is now home to a range of businesses including Royal Mail and the airlines Go and BMI, which connect to a range of European destinations.

<sup>3</sup> LCC Research Bulletin March 2002

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

Leicestershire is predominantly rural, but has many vibrant market towns; some of these, such as Melton Mowbray, Castle Donington, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Market Harborough, have histories that date back over many centuries. Leicestershire has a wealth of heritage sites, both natural and built. There are currently over 4400 statutorily 'listed' buildings in the county, of which 397 are grade I and II\* representing buildings of outstanding national importance. The church of St Mary, Melton Mowbray, for example, is generally considered to be one of the finest medieval parish churches in England. In addition to these listed buildings there are 193 designated conservation areas and 207 scheduled ancient monuments. Amongst the latter are the ruins of Grace Dieu priory, a rare example of an Augustinian Nunnery, and currently the subject of a major restoration scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.

(photo of each)

Leicestershire has an abundance of picturesque 'traditionally English Midlands' villages from Hallaton and Medbourne in the south with thatched cottages, medieval churches, village greens and crosses, to Stathern, ten miles north of Melton Mowbray, which until 1920, was well known as a centre of lace production. Bottesford, in the far north-east of the county, lies in the shadow of Belvoir Castle, home of the Earls and Dukes of Rutland. Today, this village serves as a rural centre to surrounding hamlets. In the north-west of the county there are many industrial remains, from the coal mining and brick manufacturing industries; the villages and towns reflect 19thC prosperity and subsequent decline, and are a microcosm of the English Industrial Revolution.

## **LEICESTERSHIRE'S HERITAGE**

The former Area of Mining Decline in the north-west of the county has now re-emerged as a major tourism and leisure provider with key sites such as Snibston (photo), Conkers (photo), Moira Furnace(photo) and Donington le Heath as major attractions. The significance of the coal mining heritage is reflected in the Snibston Colliery buildings - scheduled as ancient monuments to stand testament to the county's contribution to the coal mining industry. Other industries, such as aircraft construction, fashion, textiles and hosiery, engineering may now be remembered only as museum exhibitions, and provide a rich insight into Leicestershire's past and present, and help us in the recognition of our identity and sense of place. Brass bands such as Desford Colliery Band are part of this living legacy.

The former Symington factory in Market Harborough, which once employed thousands of workers from the local community in the production of Liberty Bodices and underwear since Victorian times, now houses a museum of local life, the library and District Council offices, and is still a powerful landmark of Harborough's industrial heritage.

Across the county are a wealth of examples of community spirit and identity - recognised through local libraries, museums (almost 40 voluntary-run museums in Leicestershire), local heritage and arts initiatives. Almost sixty percent of parishes participate in recording schemes to support the countywide environmental and heritage database, which help guide planning decisions and aid our collective understanding of the county's past and present cultural assets.(photo)

Churches and chapels, large and small, are becoming increasingly important for their secular as well as religious roles. Annual music festivals, such as Peckleton, Loughborough and Hinckley, hosted in parish churches, have acquired regional reputations. Exhibitions of rare manuscripts and archives feature regularly and help foster interest in family and local history. Most religious buildings boast outstanding fine architecture, interesting memorials and links with the famous - George Fox, the Wesleys, and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. Staunton Harold parish church was one of only two churches to be built in England during the Civil War.

Leicestershire has a wealth of heritage sites, both natural and built. New evidence of the richness of its archaeological heritage is being discovered each year. Leicestershire's prehistoric roots are being revealed with an important Neolithic ritual site at Husbands Bosworth and later hillforts at Beacon and Burrough Hills merely the tip of the iceberg. The Roman presence included some ten Roman small towns, as well as villas, farms and industrial sites. The farms of the earliest Anglo-Saxons are now being found in all parts of the county. Leicestershire has a nationally significant resource in its medieval earthworks, including deserted medieval villages and ridge and furrow, while castles like Ashby and Kirby Muxloe, and religious houses like Grace Dieu, stand comparison with any in the country. The Bosworth Battlefield site, marks one of the most important turning points in English history, when Henry Tudor defeated Richard III on 22 August 1485; it is recognised as being of national importance. There are also fourteen registered historic parks and gardens in Leicestershire, with a further twenty-one under consideration for designation by English Heritage.

Foxhunting was 'founded' near Melton Mowbray, and the surrounding architecture and landscape is testament to this. The museum in that town today recognises this unique role in its displays and collections which cover the history and contemporary thinking about hunting and other aspects of the countryside and country life.

(Photos – painting)

### **Appreciate and Protect the Environment**

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's Biodiversity Action Plan refers to a recent audit which identified over 900 local priority species; these include the green winged orchid, which is only found in five county fields, barn owls, dormice, bats and water voles. All of these species are identified as rare, under threat or in decline, and the Biodiversity Action Plan has developed measures to reduce the threat to these and other species – some of which have a special place in the county's folklore and legends.

Leicestershire hosts much of the National Forest and precious pockets of ancient woodland. Charnwood Forest is an area of international geological importance. The wealth of public parks and open spaces are well used and treasured by local people. Consultation revealed that the majority of Leicestershire residents were very proud of the rural beauty of the area, and felt that the county's open spaces offered scope for reflection and relaxation.

The county is also home to some of the most beautiful stretches of waterways in Britain, with Foxton Locks, Ashby Canal and the Grand Union Canal being voted as favourite landmarks in our consultation process.

(photos)

### **Good Sports**

Leicestershire has a proud sporting championship tradition, attributed in part to the Leicester City Football Club, Leicester Tigers Rugby Football Club and Leicestershire County Cricket Club. Leicestershire is also seen as a major location for motor racing in Castle Donington and Mallory Park. The very successful Leicester Ladies Hockey Team and Leicester Riders Basketball Team are based in Loughborough. The University there has world class facilities and leads the premiership in sports related courses. Long distance runner Paula Radcliffe and many other champions are associated with the University. The work of amateur, school and professional sport is now co-ordinated through the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Sports Forum.

The county has an extremely innovative sports sector – through local authority networks, which ensure participation at all levels and hosts the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Youth Games on an annual basis; Leicestershire also has an active disabled sports forum. In addition, many clubs and teams compete in a variety of leagues, often relying on strong volunteer input. The professional sports organisations in the region also have an immense impact on the quality of life of Leicestershire residents.

Stoney Cove, in Blaby district, was once a quarry, and, although miles from the sea, is now used as a national diving centre, and a watersports venue renowned for water-skiing and wakeboarding. Golf venues exist in every district and the Council-run Enderby Golf Course in Blaby district offers players of all abilities the opportunity to play golf on a pay as you go basis. The course has junior golf provision and a golf shop offering a full range of equipment and friendly advice.

### **Enjoy yourself...**

In terms of cuisine, Leicestershire is well known for its typically English traditional exports – the Melton Mowbray pork pie and the Stilton cheese. Over the last thirty years, Leicestershire, particularly the Charnwood and Oadby and Wigston areas, have, like Leicester City itself, become renowned for their rich south Asian culture and cuisine. The restaurant and pub scene is very vibrant in the county with many award-winning venues. This sector employs large numbers of people and draws visitors and tourists from far beyond the county boundaries. Most towns have a range of pubs and clubs, catering for all ages in the locality and Coalville nightclub The Emporium attracts thousands of revellers each week from across the country. The village pub, however, is still a key focal point for many rural communities. Leisure centres, health spas and gyms provide opportunities for socialising, health and sports development across the county, and offer a range of classes, treatments and facilities to suit all ages and pockets.

## **Create and innovate**

A growing sector, especially in south Leicestershire, is the range of creative businesses and small cultural enterprises that are either well established or are emerging - particularly in the fields of publishing, leisure, design and new media. This flourishing economy of small and medium enterprises is well located within the national framework and integral to the regeneration and future wealth of local communities. Creativity, however, can be measured in many more ways than just economic, and can help us see the world in new ways, help us to express ourselves, and unite communities through joint endeavour. There are a number of important arts organisations in the county – many of whom, such as Charnwood Arts (reputedly the largest arts community based arts organisation in the country), Leicestershire Youth Arts, Peckleton Arts in the Hinckley area, and Mantle Arts in the North West are firmly based in the heart of their communities. The amount of excellent activity in community arts needs to be both celebrated and built upon, in order for communities to engage with the arts within a social framework.

Through the local authority arts development network, Leicestershire is at the forefront of rural arts touring schemes – such as Centre Stage – which brings professional live performances to communities who otherwise would be unable to access high quality arts programming.

Many county residents use Leicester's Haymarket Theatre to access professional theatre (photo) which is reciprocated through outreach programmes involving all age groups, and all sectors of Leicestershire's communities. Several hundred county children take part in Leicester Haymarket Youth Theatre which involves over 200 performances and workshops each year and links to other professional theatres and television companies.

The county has a vibrant level of interest and achievement in music – from brass bands that arose out of the mining culture in the north west of the county, to youth choirs, orchestras and an annual 'singing week' in Loughborough. Music schemes using DJ-ing skills are popular for schools and youth clubs throughout Leicestershire.

Leicestershire County Council's Education Department (LEA) has made a considerable commitment to the performing and visual arts over the past 60 years. New schools and colleges have been designed by leading architects and many are innovative and radical buildings. Self-contained and original Art and Design departments were built as an integral part of many schools and colleges. Using the percent for art scheme, schools and colleges have also acquired significant works of art by distinguished artists. The Artworks scheme, which was started in the late forties, enabled schools to buy works of art from the likes of Bridget Riley, Henry Moore, Patrick Heron and Paula Rego. In the early 1980's, an exhibition called 'Growing Up with Art' celebrating the Leicestershire Artworks scheme was held at the Whitechapel Gallery in London under the auspices of Nicholas Serota, now Director of the Tate Galleries.

The LEA has also pioneered the development of photography and media in its schools. The now independent and highly successful Picture House

(photography centre) was started with the authority, and the British Film Institute opened its first regional library and resources bank in a Leicestershire teacher's centre.

In 1948, Eric Pinkett MBE, the county's music adviser, set up the first schools' orchestra. This rapidly grew into the Leicestershire School of Music, providing instrumental tuition and a range of orchestras and bands for young people. The Leicestershire School's Symphony Orchestra is now an orchestra of international standing. In the 1970's, the Leicestershire Schools Ballet scheme and Youth Ballet were set up, and continue to flourish. Since 1993, Leicestershire Arts in Education has merged a lot of this arts provision, providing teacher training, curriculum advice and summer schools. Many former pupils are now performing in national ensembles and companies

Leicestershire is emerging as a county of excellence in the fields of broadcasting technology, with the award winning cine lens company Cooke Optics being based in Thurmaston, the television company, MATV, has its home in Leicester, and broadcasts across the midlands to Anglo Asian audiences. In addition De Montfort University runs innovative courses in media technology in conjunction with the BBC, and Loughborough University is home to the Arts and Technology Partnership. The developments in this field are very exciting, and prove that Leicestershire is not only a county rich in heritage, but rich in innovation and entrepreneurship across a whole spectrum of activity from sports to business.

## CONSULTATION

Initial research was undertaken by consultants Torkildsen Barclay, who reviewed areas of service with the relevant local authorities, which led to the publication of an Issues Paper in 2000. This paper revealed that a thematic approach would be more appropriate for the partnership and the county as a whole, and identified four key areas rather than a 'sectoral' one:

**Strengthening communities**  
**Improving lifestyles and health**  
**Celebrating Leicestershire**  
**Building a cultural and creative economy.**

This was accepted, as a framework, by the Cultural Strategy Partnership in 2001.

Since May 2002, consultation has been aimed to reach all sectors of the community. Three levels of consultation have taken place across the county, to enable all citizens to take part. Consultation has focused on qualitative research in order to get a broad range of opinions, concerns and ideas, through:

- Citizen's forum
- Cultural Providers and stakeholders
- Individual Voices

### **Citizen's Forum**

Involved broad-based public consultation and 'Citizens Forum' discussions with groups and communities across the region (i.e. schools, youth clubs, neighbourhood groups and community and voluntary organisations). This research was carried out in a variety of ways:

- Direct approach to specific groups in the voluntary and community sectors.
- Focus group meetings with a range of community organisations.
- Involvement with local media - 'opinion formers' in local newspapers, council publications and radio station phone-ins. Partners have included the Leicester Mercury, Leicestershire Matters – the newsletter of Leicestershire County Council, and BBC Radio Leicester.
- 'Love Leicestershire' postcard campaign - postcards inviting comments were placed in public areas of council offices and areas of cultural provision.

### **Cultural Providers and Stakeholders**

Involved a range of both public and private sector 'cultural providers', from private gyms and health club operators to shopping centres, managers and workers in the creative industries, to theatres and arts centres staff,

broadcasters, book publishers, artists and crafts people. It also includes organisations and individuals who have an interest in, or whose work is affected by, cultural provision, such as essential service providers (NHS, the Police, and Education) and national organisations such as British Waterways, the National Trust, Sport England and English Heritage.

This research was carried out in three major ways:

- Direct consultation with arts development, leisure and sports networks and fora.
- By questionnaire - to reach the private sector and creative industries who may have limited time to take part. This also acted as an 'awareness' raising exercise of the potential benefits of being involved in a broader cultural and creative community.
- Through a Conference with representatives from cultural organisations, the voluntary and private sectors, education, heritage, health, the police, libraries and archives, sport and arts organisations, voluntary and community groups and creative and broadcasting industries.

### **Individual Voices**

Working directly on a one-to-one basis in order to gain the relevant input from excluded individuals, and those communities and individuals who are harder to reach, alongside relevant agencies (for example, parish councils, NFU, the probation service and Social Services) who provided advice and guidance. We proactively invited consultation with individuals not able, for whatever reason, to take part in the other two consultation formats.

### **Consultation findings**

The results of the consultation process have formed the basis of the Strategy's Challenges to reflect not only the views of Leicestershire people but also the views of organisations and voluntary groups who provide cultural services, in the county and beyond.

Consultees said that the cultural aspects of Leicestershire that they want to see enhanced include:

- The natural environment and country parks and allotments.
- The historic and built environment and celebration of the county's heritage.
- Sporting activity – particularly recognising the involvement of volunteers in amateur sports and the pleasure gained from being a spectator at major sports events.

Festivals and arts, including theatre, cinema, art galleries and melas, competitions and celebratory events from local to international scale - where appropriate working with similar communities across the UK and overseas.

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Open Museum**

Leicestershire's Open Museum is an innovative approach to delivering museum and archive resources to community and education groups and the wider public. The Open Museum operates a 'Resource Box' scheme for groups to book their own objects and artefacts for local purposes. This service is particularly popular with schools who can use the materials for creative teaching within the National Curriculum.

Schools and community groups in Leicestershire can take out on loan Artworks from a range of internationally renowned artists from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, including work from artists such as Bridget Riley, Paula Rego, David Hockney and Henry Moore, as well as work from Leicestershire artists. The 'Artworks' collection began as one of the earliest school art loan services in the country in 1947. Today, the collection is still being developed, and continues to provide a valued service to schools and community groups throughout the county.

'Moving Objects' is the third strand of the Open Museum, which brings museum displays and projects into the villages and towns of Leicestershire. These displays are available for loan to community groups and venues free of charge, and can be used in buildings as diverse as libraries, town and village halls, youth clubs, day centres, job centres and community centres.

#### **(Photo X 2)**

#### **Centre Stage Rural Touring Scheme**

Centre Stage is the Rural and Community Touring Scheme for Leicestershire and Rutland (Arts Council supported), bringing opportunities for professional live theatre and performing arts to village and community venues throughout the two counties. Touring companies and performers – with regional, national and international profiles, tour to communities and venues that otherwise could not access professional theatre. On offer are a range of events from music, opera, dance, storytelling, children's theatre, puppetry and comedy theatre, supplemented where possible by participatory workshops in the community.

#### **(Photo)**

#### **Sileby Village Appraisal**

Many villages in Leicestershire are now developing their village appraisals. The Sileby village appraisal is an in depth report – taking on board full consultation with its communities - to develop a vision for the village and a strategy that is working towards addressing the key strengths and weaknesses of the appraisal. The report is evidence of a community working

together to improve essential services and quality of life. The report also shows how communities have worked together to identify key cultural concerns – including better youth facilities, better looking shop frontages and the development of parks for recreation. Comments from the 1371 questionnaires received include:

“The village retail economy has been decimated”

“I would offer my home for an activity group, for example crafts for retired people”

“There is need for a sports centre”

“The village youth have a right to some form of leisure pursuits...”

### **Charnwood Arts**

*“We are of the mind that artistry, enjoyment of the arts and the right to participate freely in cultural life is the birthright of everyone”.*

Have been in existence since 1976, and at the heart of their work is the notion of community and the philosophy that art is for everyone. This is demonstrated by innovative arts practice and research, covering most art forms, from combined arts projects, performances, outdoor events, publications, web sites (including digital radio) CD-ROM and video productions, school and community residencies, exhibitions, and ongoing work with groups.

An independent community arts and media organisation, Charnwood Arts’ work takes on many roles, and continues to develop the cultural well being of Charnwood communities, and offer opportunities for global interaction via the web. It also offers opportunities for placements for artists and students on exchange or work programmes from anywhere in the world.

“We believe that creative poverty and creative wealth exist in all walks of life, and that the needs of creating and maintaining society demand creative dialogues between everyone. However, we may not prioritise our work with those who are seen to have access that is denied to others, but rather encourage those with prior skills and advantages to share them with other people, and build lasting partnerships and mutual understanding”.

### **Hinckley and Bosworth Rural Cultural Project**

The main aim of this initiative is to raise the profile of cultural activities in the area, while addressing issues such as exclusion and rural isolation. By providing greater access to the arts, the project aims to develop further social cohesion, while attracting more visitors to the area. Visitors will be encouraged to visit a range of cultural and artistic producers – such as artists’ studios, antique and craft outlets and the range of historic sites in the area – thereby benefiting local tourism industry and stimulating regeneration. The Rural Cultural Project was drawn up after consultation revealed that local people felt a need to revitalise their rural areas – and offering scope for further involvement in a range of activities with, and by young people.

## **Contour and Cream**

Contour and Cream is a community project based around the two Symington industries in Market Harborough: corsetry and foodstuffs. The aim of the project has been to research, restore and celebrate a colony of industrial workers, to provide them with a legacy that otherwise might be forgotten. Community life surrounding Harborough's two Symington factories has long since vanished as new technologies and cheaper methods have overtaken labour-heavy industry. This project revived a community deeply embedded in Harborough's history, and sought to educate and inform future generations. Oral history information, and film, photographs and paper-based resources were used by Leicestershire-based artist Elaine Pantling to create a live performance using film and recorded stories – which will be toured to rural venues. A website about the project raised its profile with similar communities internationally, and a small archive and publication were produced to keep the project alive after the tour was completed.

(photo)

## **Heritage Watch**

Helps local people discover more about the special character of Leicestershire and Rutland. Heritage Watch offers opportunities for groups and individuals to take an active role in the conservation of their local heritage. The scheme has delivered outreach at the local level, developed material for training local communities and raised local interest in the county's heritage. Heritage Watch has achieved national recognition and has influenced national policies. 56% of Leicestershire parishes took part in the scheme. Funding was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund, support from Severn Trent Water, who offered free access to venues and support for many of the wildlife programmes under the scheme, and parish councils provided the local infrastructure for ratification of wardens.

## **Environmental Improvements through SHIRE Grants**

One of the nine successful SHIRE Grants schemes run by the County Council focuses on supporting environmental improvements countywide. The scheme aims to ensure that Leicestershire's communities play an important part in identifying the problems that affect them and help shape the solutions to those problems. Communities have responded enthusiastically to the increasing support that has been provided by the County Council. The wide range of schemes supported include village centre improvements, restoration of local landmark features, play areas, park enhancements, wildlife habitat creation, tree planting, hedge laying, pond creation, drystone walls, community lighting schemes etc. Sixty community schemes will be supported in 2002/03 with grants of up to £10,000 (average £5,000).

## CELEBRATING LEICESTERSHIRE

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Bosworth Battlefield**

The famous historic site of the Battle of Bosworth field where King Richard III was defeated by the future Henry VII in 1485. The visitor centre has an award-winning interpretation of the battle, and the site is used for re-enactments and other events such as the King of Spin Community Theatre Project in conjunction with Leicester Haymarket Theatre. The adjacent Battlefield Line (steam railway) is a great tourist asset, linking the Battlefield with Shackerstone.

#### **County of the Horse**

Leicestershire's Tourism partners have identified the county as ideal for all kinds of equestrian activity, and Leicestershire County Council is one of a few councils to have an equestrian strategy. From promoting the county as 'horse friendly', to forging economic partnerships between riding centres, to developing networks of accessible riding country, particularly around the National Forest area, this development also benefits the tourism industry and related crafts and trades such as saddlers and farriers.

#### **Farmers' Markets**

The County has a thriving Farmer's Market scene – covering the majority of market towns at least once a month. The markets offer the opportunity for farmers to sell produce direct to local people ensuring that the Leicestershire consumer has access to fresh, quality locally produced food, from farm-made cheese to honey and vegetables and even arts and crafts.

#### **Leicestershire Sports**

Recent developments at Loughborough University related to the English Institute of Sport network of elite training facilities have seen a significant impact, through both the development of sports facilities, totalling over £35 million capital investment and the location of over 120 world class performance athletes in the local area. National and regional governing bodies of sport and sport organisations are relocating to Loughborough, due to the unique nature of this developing cluster. It is possible that soon Leicestershire will be the biggest exporter of graduates in sports-related studies across the whole country. Sport's contribution to the regional economy is in the region of 25,000 jobs<sup>5</sup> representing approximately 1.4% of the region's workforce. Evidence suggests that Loughborough University is responsible for a high percentage of this activity.

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Youth Games is an annual festival of sports activity which takes place throughout the whole area – with young

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<sup>5</sup> Cambridge Econometrics provisional research data November 2002

people learning new sports, developing talent and competing in a whole range of activity.

### **BBC Radio Leicester**

BBC Radio Leicester went on air on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1967 as the first local radio station in Britain, breaking a London-centric broadcasting mould that had ruled since the 1920's. The impact was immediate and lasting, with BBC Radio Leicester as the "people's radio" now part of the fabric of local life along with its BBCi website. Thirty odd years later, the station is still thriving in a Leicestershire radio market, that now has six analogue commercial radio stations and yet more available on digital radio. Since 1967, Radio Leicester has been at the heart of both urban and rural communities covering local and national events.

In 2005 BBC Radio Leicester, together with the national Asian Network, plans to move to a new digital multi-media and learning centre in the heart of old Leicester, offering essential radio, television and internet services with lifelong learning facilities, cyber café and mobile buses taking learning out into Leicestershire and Rutland, living proof of how media practice can be at the heart of communities, offering information, empowerment and companionship.

(Photo – logo)

## IMPROVING LIFESTYLES AND HEALTH

### CASE STUDIES

#### **GREAT: County Cricket Club study centre**

GREAT study support centre is based at Grace Road, home of Leicestershire County Cricket Club. GREAT is an acronym for Grace Road Education and Teamwork. GREAT opened in June 2001. GREAT uses the game of cricket to motivate young people to improve their skills in maths, literacy and ICT, and was awarded the Quality In Study Support quality kite mark in 2002. Leicestershire County Cricket Club and GREAT have also achieved national recognition from the Department for Education and Skills for its pioneering work in education. The club has linked up to a government initiative 'Playing for Success' to help city and county pupils achieve better results at school. The idea is to use sport to motivate young people to learn, with a well planned reward system, plus input from the First Team players. Recent research has shown that GREAT and Playing for Success are popular with teachers, parents and pupils, and have contributed to improved achievement and self-confidence. GREAT works with city and county schools, and provides transport for the pupils attending the centre supported by Leicestershire County Council Client and Technical Support Services.

#### **Broughton Astley Riding for the Disabled Group**

The national Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) approves centres, and directs training. In Leicestershire, there are a number of Riding for the Disabled clubs, supported by large numbers of volunteers. The main customers are children, who enjoy the open air, develop muscle and fitness, and build relationships with their helpers and the horses. A number of participants have won awards. Broughton Astley, in the Harborough district is a small club, and one of the oldest Riding for the Disabled groups in the country, having been run entirely by volunteers for 35 years. Special schools are the main 'customers', and RDA essentially builds self-esteem and confidence in young people who have a range of disability:

'I like it because I'm good at it – well I think I am'

'I like the horses, and it's good for my muscles',

It's fun, exciting, and great physio – we do back stretches, and other exercises'.

'I have progressed so much, I no longer need a sidewalker, and can ride entirely on my own.'

#### **Arts and Technology Partnerships**

Is a rapidly developing digital arts organisation that works with new and emerging technologies in a variety of ways locally, regionally and nationally. The main core of the work is developing partnerships between artists and technologists to enable them to create new work. This work is developed by community and education initiatives, which allow freedom of expression in the arts – be it visual, performing or media based.

Programmes include Enabling Technologies for Creativity which aims to explore ways in which new technologies can enable artists and designers who have illnesses such as muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy to create prints, animations, product designs and sculptures. Other projects have included The Origins of Drawing, which is an education programme looking at how children learn to draw. Digital Arts Weeks place digital artists in schools to allow children and their teachers to experiment with different media.

The organisation runs digital media facilities to allow artists and technologists to experiment on a wide range of projects. Virtual Reality in Education explores how a virtual reality environment can enable young people with severe physical disabilities, to create, explore, move around in and interact with a virtual space in which they have much greater freedom than in the physical world. This is AT, another innovative range of projects brings together artists and technologists to work collaboratively on goals ranging from contributing to the development of new technologies to education based empowerment programmes.

Arts and Technology Partnership's unique relationship with Loughborough University places it in a position to make high-end technology available to all kinds of artist. A programme of residencies, commissions, training opportunities, education & research projects and the creation of a digital media facility achieves this.

### **Paintings in Hospitals**

Is a registered charity that lends paintings and other works of art to hospitals, hospices and health care centres throughout England, Northern Ireland and Wales. The charity's aim is to provide original works of art in an effective and low cost way that will enhance the healthcare environment for patients, staff and visitors. The midlands branch provides art works for the three major hospitals in Leicestershire – The General, Leicester Royal Infirmary and The Glenfield Hospital. Paintings in Hospitals buys work from nationally renowned artists, local artists and also buy from local degree shows. Glenfield Hospital, for example has borrowed work from graduates from Loughborough University.

Internationally recognised artist PJ Crook has donated 'Circus Triptych' to the midlands collection, and it is now displayed in a children's ward in Glenfield Hospital.

'I like the idea of my work being used in a hospital, it is right that they should be made interesting with things there to ignite the imagination. I thought a children's ward would be the right place for the triptych. Children are so inquisitive and when they interact with a painting, it becomes something that is almost living, rather than something fairly static in a gallery or museum'

(photo)

### **Zygote**

North West Leicestershire District Council working in partnership with North West Leicestershire Health Forum commissioned internationally acclaimed

Ludus dance company to create an edgy piece of physical theatre; the subject matter dealt with issues surrounding teenage pregnancy and parenting. Dance is a social form that many people engage in, and has a resonance with youth culture and lifestyle. Health, education, youth and social workers were also involved in developing the project, which toured across Leicestershire and involved over 1400 young people. After the Leicestershire residency, Ludus toured the piece in Columbia for the British Council.

(photo)

## BUILDING A CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECONOMY

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Cooke Optics**

*“Why waste time doing what other people can do, go out for something new”<sup>6</sup>*

Cooke Optics are a Thurmaston based company who are the only organisation in the world dedicated to supporting the film industry with the design, manufacture and service of film cine lenses. The company founded originally as TS and W Taylor in 1886, is still a family orientated business – with a global reputation. Cooke Optics lenses have been used on a range of music videos, TV commercials, TV series and a whole host of Hollywood films, including:

Being John Malkovitch, Bridget Jones’ Diary, The Beach, Cruel Intentions, Hannibal, O Brother Where Art Thou? and Chicken Run, to name a few.

The company builds handcrafted camera lenses and has a deserved global reputation for excellence in the complex business of precision optics. An ‘Investors in People’ company, Cooke Optics have also won a DTI SMART award in 1999 and are an East Midlands Beacon Company. Cooke Optics have also won the Queen’s Award for both Innovation and International Trade, in recognition of their unique contribution to the international film industry, and in 2001 were joint winners of the prestigious Exporter Of The Year Award.

Cooke Optics is now a stand-alone company that combines the modern design and material technologies available with traditional manufacturing methods that have been proven throughout the years, and is a beacon of excellence for Leicestershire industry.

#### **Rachel Barnett**

Rachel Barnett is an artist who works with concrete in an unusually beautiful and aesthetic fashion. Based in the peace and quiet of her Narborough studio, she feels no sense of isolation, given that she has managed to forge important links with nearby retail outlets Narborough Hall and Narborough Home – which she considers extremely important

as a selling opportunity to employees from local large companies such as Next and the Alliance Leicester - both of whom have headquarters nearby. Rachel produces work that is popular in London interiors outlets, and has sold a range of concrete furniture in the capital for a number of years. More locally, Rachel’s work has been exhibited in Leicester’s City Gallery and Peel Gallery, which led to a series of commissions in gourmet restaurants.

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<sup>6</sup> William Taylor one of the original 19<sup>th</sup> century founders of the company now known as Cooke Optics

## **Stocks Taylor Benson**

Are a local design company who have built a strong reputation for packaging, exhibition and retail design as well as producing catalogues for companies as diverse as Kit Heath Jewellers, Blacks Leisure, Avon and Lincolnshire Social Services. The company has a clear communication policy. "To enable us to do this, we have no middlemen, bag carriers, account executives or suits. These can be vacuous holes for important information to disappear into..."

"In a football team the striker is used to score goals, and the goalkeeper to save them. Although they are both important members of the team, they have very different skills... We have a team of 17 designers who also have many different abilities and talents. Like the football team, this means that we use the designers with the right skills at each stage of the design process. This enables our clients to achieve their design goals."

## **Fashion Gallery**

Planned to open in 2005, the new Fashion Gallery based at Snibston Discovery Park in north west Leicestershire will bring together objects and research relating to the fashion industry, from 1750 to today. With hundreds of years of textiles, hosiery and fashion production in the county it is important that this valuable resource exists not only for its heritage value, but also as an invaluable research and development archive for fashion designers and associated trades throughout the UK and Europe.

The project is a partnership between Leicestershire County Council's Heritage Service, fashion retailer Next plc and three of the region's universities. The gallery proposal is currently the subject of a bid for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The gallery is a unique opportunity for a museum to work with business communities and the creative industries – especially in assisting young entrepreneurs with inspiration, trend analysis and range building.

Next plc and Heritage Services have been working in partnership for ten years, building up an archive of material relating to the company's twenty plus years on the High Street.

## **LIST OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED**

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