

**WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP**

**19th July 2007**

**Report by Chief Executive**

**PEOPLE PLACES AND SPACES**

**Purpose of report**

1. To give members the opportunity to agree a response to the consultation document *People, Places and Spaces* published by Culture South West.

**Background**

2. *People, Places and Spaces*, sub-titled 'A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West' and included in Appendix A, was published in April and invites responses by the end of this month. It brought together regional culture agencies, the lottery distributors, the South West Regional Assembly, the Government Office for the South West, the South West Region Development Agency and local authority officers through the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association for the South West.

***People, Places and Spaces* recommendations**

3. The report identifies ten Planning Areas for Culture, including the West of England, and four themes:
  - Theme 1: Icons of the South West
  - Theme 2: Our history and heritage
  - Theme 3: 2012 and beyond
  - Theme 4: Image and reputation
4. About the West of England it says:

*Bristol is the priority area, as it offers the greatest potential for a joint cultural hub/zone with significant impact on the sub region. We will look to work with the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership as well as the West of England cultural planning agenda.*
5. The report identifies 13 actions. These cover: leadership; research and intelligence; partnership and prioritisation; major events; development and investment; and review and assessment.
6. The report has been discussed by the Culture, Leisure and Tourism Officers Group which has prepared a draft consultation response on behalf of the West of England, included in Appendix B.

## **Recommendations**

That the Partnership considers the draft response and approve it as the West of England Partnership's response.

**Appendix A**        *People, Places and Spaces – A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West*

**Appendix B**        Draft West of England Partnership response

## WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP

### Culture, Leisure and Tourism Group

#### DRAFT RESPONSE TO *PEOPLE, PLACES AND SPACES*

The West of England Partnership welcomes the report and considers it a useful document which, together with the expected Cultural Strategy for the South West, should drive forward the broader cultural agenda for the region.

Our comments are focused on the overall strategic approach of *People, Places and Spaces*, as our member authorities and partner agencies are submitting their own, more detailed, responses concerning content and style.

There are three main benefits:

1. The document sets out a broad context for culture in relation to the Regional Spatial Strategy
2. Firstly and for the first time the document identifies the key iconic cultural infrastructure
3. It identifies the distinction between iconic regional/nationally significant infrastructure and that needed to secure sustainable local communities.

These benefits are welcomed and need further enhancement through the development of spatial planning policies at regional, sub regional and local level.

The West of England is the pre-eminent sub-region in the south west, driving the economy of the region as a whole. The role of culture is vitally important in this, enhancing the region's economy and quality of life to bring people to the area to live and work, as well as to visit. We think that the document requires a stronger focus on this crucial relationship, underpinning economic growth for the sub-region and beyond. The economic and social benefits need to be expressed more clearly. The document needs to be commended to SWRDA to encourage SWRDA to become more pro-active in developing cultural projects' infrastructure and bring economic impact of culture higher up their agenda.

We welcome the focus around key south west infrastructure and the direction for local provision. There is great potential to enhance the current cultural offer in the sub-region, with several major projects planned or in development. In addition, Bristol is the clear choice for an international conference centre, which requires location in the centre of a major city. Equally, an arena and a major stadium require a concentration of population for success and the West of England, and Bristol in particular, is the only part of the region with this requirement.

Beside the regional priorities set out on page 23, there are others which we think should be mentioned, including:

- The National Wildlife Conservation Park to be developed by Bristol Zoo

- The Science Museum, at Wroughton, Swindon, which has the potential to link closely with Bristol, one of only six Science Cities in England
- The Concorde Museum.

We suggest that the document should give more precedence to festivals and events. The South West hosts festivals of international renown, including the Glastonbury Festival, the Bristol Balloon Festival and the Bath Festival. Investment in these events is important because of the very significant economic contribution that they bring and therefore that culture plays in the life of the region. The size of the footfall is key here and we need SWRDA to recognise and support these events.

Compared to other core cities Bristol's spend on culture is very low [Stephen Wray to provide figures].