



Leisure, Culture & Arts

# A CULTURAL STRATEGY

for WEST LANCASHIRE



2004





# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## Glossary of terms/abbreviations

ASBO:	Anti-social Behaviour Order
BME:	Black and minority ethnic
CCS:	Corporate Cultural Strategy (2000)
CSP:	Community Safety Partnership
DCMS:	Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
EAP:	European Action Plan.
EHB:	English Heritage Board.
EYDCPs:	Early Years Development Childcare Partnerships
LANPAC:	Lancashire Partnership Against Crime
LCA:	Leisure, Culture and Arts
LCS:	Local Cultural Strategy
LEA:	Local Education Authority
LSP:	Local Strategic Partnership.
NOF:	New Opportunities Fund
NPFA:	National Playing Fields Association
NWCC:	North West Cultural Consortium.
NWDA:	North West Development Agency.
NWTB:	North West Tourist Board.
RAP:	Recreational Activity Programme
SDO/U:	Sports Development Officer/Unit
SAS:	Sport Action Skelmersdale
SRB:	Single Regeneration Budget.
WLDC:	West Lancashire District Council
YOT:	Youth Offending Team
YST:	Youth Sport Trust

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## FOREWORD

I am proud to introduce the new cultural strategy for the District of West Lancashire.

This document covers a variety of issues including sporting events, sports facilities, parks and open spaces, art development, arts facilities and play services. The aim is to deliver better cultural and sporting opportunities for everyone.

West Lancashire's cultural facilities have undergone vast improvements over recent years, helping to create cultural opportunities for residents, as well as those visiting from outside the District.

There are many things to be praised within West Lancashire, but we must not rest on our success if we want to see real changes in quality services.

The Cultural Strategy offers a challenge to the Council to keep improving our services and changing the way we provide them, to make a significant contribution to the quality of life of all those who live in West Lancashire.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy indicates how culture contributes to improving and enhancing the quality of life in the District and to the alleviation of issues and problems associated with the Council's corporate priorities. The cultural strategy vision is:

- To improve the quality, quantity and sustainability of cultural activity - for all residents; and the quality of time spent in the district - for visitors.
- To make additional effort to enhance the quality of life and (via this) the life-chances of people from identified groups in the District.

There is a clear partnership basis for delivery of Strategy objectives. This must, however, be linked to realistic evaluation of partner capacity, and a clear mutual rationale for such partnerships.

### **Sport. & recreation**

WLDC, working with key partners (in education, the community, the voluntary sector and with other statutory agencies will:

#### *Proactive development of sport*

- Give priority to enabling and promoting access for young people (particularly girls) to sporting opportunities.
- Support work designed to ensure that all young people in the District receive the 'PE Entitlement' (2 hours of quality PE and sport per week).
- Work with schools to plan and orient curricular and after-school activities in the context of what is available and sustainable in the local environment.
- Proactively support development of sporting opportunity for people with physical and sensory impairment and from black and ethnic minority groups.
- Give priority to making provision available to 'looked after' young people.
- Increase focus upon ways in which sport can meet regeneration objectives.
- Gear work to provision of support for agencies working to reduce crime.
- Make specific provision to cater for the defined need of the over 55s
- Identify and proactively work to develop priority sports in the District
- Strengthen and proactively support voluntary sports clubs that assist with strategy implementation.

#### *Facilities planning and management*

- Plan strategically for indoor and outdoor sports facility provision across the District. \*
- Develop a closer working relationship with schools operating community use of their sports facilities.
- Evaluate the potential to develop a central programming co-ordination mechanism for sport and recreation facilities across the District.

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- ❑ Gear its fitness provision/services more closely to the needs of the unfit and the unwell.
- ❑ Review and positively amend policies that directly impact upon the capacity of priority groups to access facilities and opportunities.

### **Countryside and outdoor recreation provision**

WLDC, working with key partners (in education, the community, the voluntary sector and with other statutory agencies will produce a strategy for countryside and open space provision incorporating plans for

- ❑ Urban parks
- ❑ Countryside
- ❑ Rights of way
- ❑ Tourism related infrastructure
- ❑ Open space and amenity greenspace
- ❑ Playing pitches and non-pitch sports provision
- ❑ Play areas

### **Play**

The District has a Play Strategy which clarifies expectations and desired outcomes. It incorporates review of the main components of play and stresses the need to ensure that management of play is isolated from 'mainstream' cultural provision. WLDC, working with key partners (in education, the community, the voluntary sector and with other statutory agencies) will:

#### *School holiday provision*

- ❑ Retain the play days concept and, within 5 years, deliver the equivalent of 10 play days in every ward in the District
- ❑ Progressively seek to support community delivery of the programme.
- ❑ Establish 10 additional school holiday programmes at agreed key locations

#### *District wide, open access, sports and arts based schemes*

- ❑ Set up an integrated outreach programme to attract current non-participants. The target should be to provide 20% of places for referrals from other schemes.
- ❑ Review timetabling, content and pricing to support extension of open access holiday programmes delivered via community voluntary sector networks.

#### *Fixed play sites*

- ❑ Commission a detailed appraisal of fixed play site provision and rationalise fixed play provision based upon a move away from small play sites in favour of improving larger facilities with better equipment and ancillary provision.

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- Support moves to generate a greater degree of local involvement in play area management.
- Consider 'contracting out' site maintenance - linked to positive incentives to work with local groups to improve site security, support local youth work programmes and clean, maintain and repair sites in line with local needs.
- Consider investment in wider array of options for young people, for example; skateboard/roller-blade/BMX, youth shelters and multi-use activity areas.

### **Arts & heritage**

WLDC, utilising the planned Voluntary Sector Forum, and working with key partners (in education, the community, the voluntary sector and other statutory agencies) will:

#### *Heritage*

- Use and resource the heritage of the area to improve and sustain quality of life for residents.
- Extend, improve and market its offer to visitors.
- Ensure that the 21<sup>st</sup> century contribution to its heritage is positive, so that it is valued by future residents and visitors.

#### *Arts venues and facilities*

- Actively pursue the proposal for the West Lancashire Heritage Centre in Ormskirk Magistrates' Court.
- Raise awareness and interest in, building design and the built environment.
- Explore the potential of a new multi-cultural discipline venue in Skelmersdale Town Centre and explore the contribution that cultural facilities and opportunities could make to Skelmersdale Town Centre. \*
- Continue to develop and extend the work of the Chapel Gallery; exploring options for more integrated programming and use of the community centre.
- Work in a closer partnership with the Rose Theatre, particularly in support of participatory projects in the performing arts sector
- Explore potential interest in redevelopment of Ormskirk Civic Hall as a flexible performing arts and entertainment venue.
- Develop a strategy to broaden the programme and user-base at North Meols Leisure Centre.

#### *Public and environmental art:*

- Adopt a public art strategy or statement of intent
- Extend the public art programme to include creative approaches to streetscape improvement
- Explore partnership-based village improvement projects
- Introduce temporary public art into Ormskirk town centre, and in other appropriate contexts.

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### *Creative industries*

- Encourage new initiatives in employment by making workshop, incubator and studio space available and, in this context consider the potential for development of the Wharfshed proposal.
- Seek to develop sustained creative employment initiatives as part of the regeneration of Skelmersdale - building upon existing initiatives and the work of Skelmersdale Community Enterprise Agency.
- Consider some form of managed workspace/creative business centre as part of the diversification and development of Skelmersdale Town Centre
- Permit and encourage the re-use of obsolete farm and industrial buildings for creative enterprises.
- Facilitate networking within the creative business sector at district level.
- Ensure that the sector is effectively and consistently represented within the Cultural Partnership.

### *Marketing and financial support for the arts*

- Establish programmes of small-scale financial support to encourage new non-professional arts and heritage activity of different kinds across the communities of West Lancashire, over an initial five-year period.
- Review marketing publicity and promotion and develop a cohesive marketing strategy.

WLDC, working with key partners (in education, the community, the voluntary sector and with other statutory agencies will:

- Develop and utilise key performance measures to demonstrate service impact.
- Collect integrated management information across the service.
- Adopt a series of performance indicators that reflect the impact made by the service - and in this context, its value for money
- Identify ways of improving the outputs of management information from the current system, e.g., through provision of appropriate training

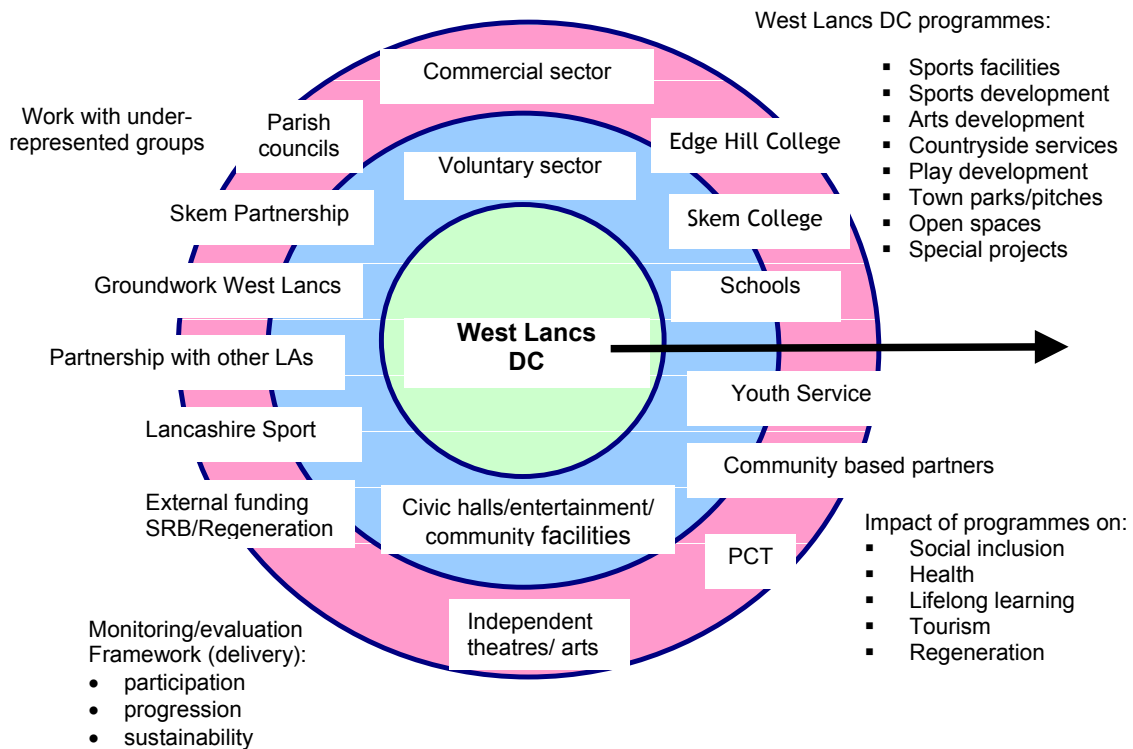
# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

## INTRODUCTION

This strategy document has been drawn up following, and is, in part, based upon a consultation process with individuals and agencies that work in and with the cultural sector, conducted by Knight, Kavanagh & Page between August 2002 and March 2003.

It is based upon, and set out in a way that reflects, the diversity of the cultural sector and, in the context of this, the Council's position at the centre of a network of agencies and groups. The diagram below outlines this. It is just an example of some of the groups and agencies with which the Council works and is not intended to be fully inclusive of all agencies operating in the District.

### *Cultural strategy framework*



Some groups tend to be 'outward focused'. These are committed to, and instrumental in, delivering local opportunity. Others prefer to concentrate on servicing the needs and interests of their members. Some are guardians of, or advocates for, specific aspects of local life. By its nature, the cultural sector includes all of these.

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The strategy is designed to:

- Take account of how the sector and the various statutory, voluntary, commercial sector, local and professional elements within it can become stronger - given its intrinsic value.
- Indicate how culture and cultural activity in all its forms can contribute to improving and enhancing the quality of life in the District.
- Indicate how, as part of a wider social menu, culture and cultural activity can contribute to alleviating issues and problems associated with the Council's corporate priorities (outlined below).

West Lancashire District Council (WLDC) has a key role supporting, financing, accommodating and delivering a substantial proportion of the cultural activity in the District. For this reason, the cultural sector needs to be attuned, and to an extent committed to 'making its case' in the context of the Council's vision, values and corporate priorities. Without such commitment, the positive outcomes associated with genuine partnership working, for both cultural groups and agencies and in the context of the quality of life of local people, may be limited.

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## THE BENEFITS OF CULTURE

This Strategy adopts the following two-dimensional definition of culture:

- *Cultural activities*; the things that people choose to do rather than activities which they need to do to survive or those that they are forced to participate in. These activities can include arts, sports, children's play, visiting parks, museums, libraries, the countryside and tourism.
- *The way of life and the values* of people in West Lancashire; the way people live their lives and the values that guide them (e.g., geographical identity, local history and character of the area)'. This includes beliefs, shared memories, image and heritage.

The definition of culture utilised broadly reflects the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) assertion that '*culture has both a material and a value dimension*'. For the purposes of this strategy, culture is used as an all-embracing term encompassing a wide range of activity. A list of the activities incorporated in the widest definition of culture can be found in Appendix 1. The benefits are summarised by the DCMS in the Government paper 'Creating Opportunities - a Guidance for Local Authorities in England on Local Cultural Strategies':

*'Culture is about improving the quality of life for all, allowing people both to derive pleasure and to fulfil their own potential and broaden their horizons. Equally, cultural services play a crucial role tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, to promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity and stimulating lifelong learning'*.

Culture and cultural activities are part of any vibrant community. It is widely recognised that cultural activity stimulates a range of benefits for the individual, the community and the local area. Cultural activity benefits all residents by:

- Providing opportunities for creativity and self-expression.
- Enabling social interaction, personal development and lifelong learning.
- Supporting the process of neighbourhood renewal and regenerative activity.
- Attracting investment and generating employment opportunities.
- Enhancing community cohesion and engaging the creative resource of local communities.
- Supporting tourism.

Cultural activities are thought to significantly contribute to tackling social issues such as social exclusion, community safety, crime and disorder and environmental sustainability. This provides a clear rationale for developing a strong cultural infrastructure for both residents and visitors.

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## WHY A CULTURAL STRATEGY?

Until recently, it was a DCMS requirement that all local authorities develop a local cultural strategy (LCS). A cultural strategy is taken to be a five-year plan to improve the cultural well-being of an area, providing a focus for future developments. The intention is to ensure that cultural activities and industries become central to the community and the corporate objectives of the local authority.

The Strategy should build upon, and be a vehicle to underpin the co-ordination of, current provision, enabling local partners to maximise opportunities for sustainable growth and external funding. The aim is to provide a framework for the development of cultural activity in West Lancashire. In particular, it seeks to:

- ❑ Clarify and refine the role and function of WLDC.
- ❑ Where relevant and applicable, translate Council corporate aims and priorities into a clear, strategic action plan format.
- ❑ Take account of the role of the voluntary, commercial and other sectors in the organisation, provision and development of cultural activity.
- ❑ Encourage partnerships and identify how all partners can contribute to the development of cultural activity locally.
- ❑ Set a framework within which culture can contribute to improving the quality of community life as a whole.
- ❑ Underpin the development of output/outcome measures via which progress in specific areas can be assessed.

The local authority has an interest in all local cultural activities and is therefore well placed to co-ordinate cultural activity within the District. In terms of direct service provision however, it is only one of a number of providers. Some, such as sports and arts development, receive direct public funding, but many others in the voluntary and commercial sectors contribute to the provision of cultural activity in the District with little or no involvement with, or support from, WLDC.

## A Cultural Partnership?

At the core of a Cultural Strategy lies partnership. To develop the full potential of the broad sweep of cultural activity and opportunity in the District effectively, the Council must work effectively with a range of other stakeholders. These range from regional cultural bodies and the North West Development Agency (NWDA) through to practitioners and projects at local level.

The Council's earlier, largely arts and heritage based cultural strategy of 2000 proposed the formation of a Cultural Partnership. This has not yet been established and, indeed, the format proposed covered only part of the field.

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Considerable benefits could be generated through an efficiently run Cultural Partnership. It would need to cover all aspects of cultural activity including sport/leisure, heritage and play. Its purpose would be, not to deal with detailed issues of particular parts of the sector, but to represent the whole sector at strategic level, acting as an advocate for cultural interventions, and working with the Council to embed cultural initiatives within its overall operations.

It should be a key tool for WLDC to generate cultural activity that assists in meeting its overall objectives and be the monitoring body for the Council's cultural strategy as a whole.

The job of this Partnership would be practical and incorporate in-depth consideration of key issues and projects. It should function in a way that stimulates new active partnership and initiatives, and be a combination of think-tank, marriage broker and project creator. It should be serviced by WLDC, and have Council representation at senior level.

Working to it should be sector- and project-specific groups, involving Council officers alongside other stakeholders and contributors. These would only exist for particular purposes, and for as long as they deliver useful outcomes.

Areas that would benefit from such treatment range include creative industries employment, cultural building intervention in Skelmersdale town centre, redevelopment of Ormskirk Civic Hall, and developing the District's heritage offer. It could also include areas as specific as the non-professional arts sector.

The Council should establish and service a Cultural Partnership.

\*\*\*

The Strategy cannot exist in isolation. It must link directly to the agencies, strategies and initiatives, that have influenced its production and, in turn, should be influenced by it. The recent announcement that Liverpool will be the Capital of Culture in 2008 and the capital investment, programmes, events and festivals that will accompany this in the five year build up to 2008 also needs to be taken into account.

The LCS must also reflect wider Government agendas in relation to social exclusion, regeneration, lifelong learning and community safety. The sections that follow examine and illustrate where West Lancashire's LCS fits into the overarching framework of regional, national and local policies.

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## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### National context

#### *Government Policy*

A number of Government policies influence provision of cultural services by local authorities. These include:

- ❑ The requirement for local authorities to publish a Best Value Performance plan by the 30th June each year.
- ❑ The requirement for local authorities to review all of their services to determine whether Best Value is being achieved and to ensure continuous improvement.
- ❑ The requirement for all local authorities to produce a Community Strategy including a vision for their local area in 2010.
- ❑ A new duty on local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.
- ❑ The requirement for Councils to produce cultural strategies, identifying the role that they will play in improving the quality of life for local residents.

The Government's 'cross-cutting' agenda must also be considered.

### PAT 10

The Social Exclusion Unit Policy Action Team report on Arts and Sports (PAT 10) highlights the central role of cultural activity at the heart of comprehensive neighbourhood renewal. It identifies its potential to contribute to key outcomes including personal development, community capacity building, reducing crime and long term unemployment, better health and attainment. The report provided evidence on the impact of arts and sports activities on neighbourhood renewal. It, therefore, reinforced the importance of including 'culture' in the mainstream planning process at all levels of government.

It identifies best practice in using sport and the arts to engage people in poor neighbourhoods, particularly those who may feel most excluded such as disaffected young people from ethnic minorities. It highlights areas where sport can play a key role in generating positive outcomes associated with crime, health, education and employment.

This strategy reflects the ambitions of, and the proposals made in, the PAT 10 report and identifies ways in which cultural activity can contribute to issues such as community capacity building, reducing crime and improving health.

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### A Sporting Future for All

In April 2000, the DCMS published its strategy for sport in England - 'A Sporting Future for All'. This identifies the Government's aims for sport as:

- More people of all ages and all social groups taking part in sport.
- More success for England's top competitors and teams in international competition.

A Sporting Future for All identifies four key issues to be tackled to improve performance in sport:

- The inadequate number of enough opportunities for children and young people to take part.
- The fact that people lose interest as they get older, reducing participation and diminishing the pool of talent
- The obstacles to the progress of those with the potential to reach the top.
- The fragmented and too often unprofessional organisation and management of sport.

### Game Plan

More recently, in December 2002, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Government's Strategy Unit published 'Game Plan'. This identifies the two overarching objectives for Government as:

- A major increase in participation in sport and physical activity, primarily because of the significant health benefits and to reduce the growing costs of inactivity.
- A sustainable improvement in success in international competition, particularly in the sports which matter most to the public, primarily because of the 'feelgood factor' associated with winning.

Three distinct aims arise from these objectives:

- To encourage a mass participation culture, with a target for 70% of the population to be reasonably active (for example 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week) by 2020.
- To enhance international success, with a target for British and English teams and individuals to sustain rankings within the top five, particularly in more popular sports.
- To adopt a different approach to hosting mega sporting events. They should be seen as an occasional celebration of success rather than as a means to achieving other government objectives.

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The report highlights the need to raise participation levels raised for the whole population, but stresses that interventions should focus on the most economically disadvantaged groups and within those, especially on young people, women and older people. For young people, the aim should be to develop 'sports literacy' (i.e., an ability across a range of skills). This Strategy identifies strong links to the health agenda, identifies the required interventions and advocates a structure that enables young people to develop physical literacy.

### Arts Council England

Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for the arts. Its focus is on growth in the arts. Its stated central belief is in the transforming power of the arts: power to change the lives of people throughout the country.

Its stated ambition is to place the arts at the heart of national life, reflecting the country's rich and diverse cultural identity. The desire is for people to experience arts activities of the highest quality. To achieve this, ACE is committed to:

- ❑ Removing unnecessary constraints on artists.
- ❑ Reaching out and nurturing the next generation of artists.
- ❑ Supporting arts which are challenging, captivating and independent in spirit.
- ❑ Seeking out new and different audiences.
- ❑ Encouraging an international perspective.

Its contention is that cultural diversity is at the heart of England's identity as a nation in the early 21st century. It is committed to increasing funding for culturally diverse arts and taking positive steps to ensure that the arts organisations it funds embody diversity.

Young people are a particular priority and ACE's 'Creative Partnerships' initiative is intended to introduce young people to professional arts activities at school and to reinforce and celebrate the value of creativity in learning.

Growth for the arts is its major ambition. Its outlined ambitions include the desire to 'grow' its people, improve facilities, strengthen and broaden existing partnerships, identify new resources for the arts and market the arts so that the case for increased public funding for the arts in future is even stronger.

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### Sport England

Sport England is the national agency driving sports development. At present (mid-2003) it is in the middle of a major 'down-sizing' process and the extent to which its present policies and programmes will be retained is unclear. It is also clear that the level of capital investment it will be in a position to support in future will be reduced although the extent to which this is the case has not yet been announced. Its role, is, however, to take a strategic view on provision for sport. Until very recently, the key themes underpinning its work were:

- More people involved in sport.
- More places to play sport.
- More medals through higher standards of performance in sport.

The primary themes of Sport England's 'More People' policy emphasis were driven via the 'Active' programmes:

- Active Schools - designed to help schools improve standards of PE/sports provision.
- *Active Communities* - designed to increase/sustain lifelong participation in sport.
- *Active Sports* - designed to help young people get more from involvement in sport.

The 'More Places' policy leans upon the premise that participation in sport at all levels, requires well-planned, designed and managed facilities. Sport England has, thus far, supported this via a planning, design, development and management service intended to maximise the benefit derived from investment in sports facilities and services.

The 'More Medals' programme focuses on an excellence programme designed to improve the standard of sporting performance of English competitors. Funding is targeted at those with the potential to win medals in significant international competitions and events.

Given the changes noted above, it is likely that there will be a reduction in policy emphasis on Sport England's branded 'Active' programmes although it is also widely thought that the majority of the core support processes involved will be retained. This may impact upon the nature and function of Lancashire Sport - the County Partnership of which West Lancashire is a member. However, the broad thrust of Sport England policy, and the emphasis of the main programmes, inasmuch as it affects West Lancashire is likely to remain. This is reflected in this context in this strategy.

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## North West Development Agency

The Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) is the regional development agency (RDA) for the North West. Its remit is to co-ordinate economic development and regeneration of the region; to promote relocation, inward investment and competitiveness; enhance training and skills; and contribute to sustainable development. Its stated vision is to create a region which:

- ❑ Attracts and retains the skilled and talented.
- ❑ Brings everyone into the mainstream of community life.
- ❑ Nurtures its environment, heritage and culture.
- ❑ Kindles creativity, innovation and competitiveness.
- ❑ Transforms its image.
- ❑ Strengthens its infrastructure.
- ❑ And is naturally on the shortlist for new investment.

It is just starting to consider where and how investment in sport and cultural activity can deliver economic development. It has, in 2002/2003 commissioned a number of studies to assess attitudes to and perceptions of sport and culture in the region and the contribution it does, or could, make to the Agency's corporate responsibility to support inward investment in the Region.

## North West Sports Board

The Sports Board is one of nine regional boards created by the Government to co-ordinate the work of sports providers in the region. It acts as a central consultation outlet for developing the regional sports agenda. Its strategy outlines six key priorities:

- ❑ Creating a strategic network.
- ❑ Developing sport.
- ❑ Young people.
- ❑ Community development.
- ❑ Research and information.
- ❑ Raising the profile.

At the time of preparation of this strategy the exact role, composition and status of the board is, given the present upheaval in Sport England, still unclear. The present position is, however, that the Board will be the entity responsible for the allocation of a significant proportion of the Sport England Lottery funds allocated to capital and revenue projects supported in the Region. It is also likely to be the Agency responsible for the determination of which local authorities are designated with Sports Action Zone status, should the programme be maintained.

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### North West Cultural Consortium (NWCC)

The NWCC has produced a regional cultural strategy for the North West (2001). Some of the key aims and objectives of this strategy are:

- To enrich our social and community life by:
  - Developing an infrastructure of activity and facilities across the public, voluntary and private sectors that ensures access to cultural opportunity is universal.
  - Encouraging understanding of the importance of culture in all aspects of life in the north west and ensuring that provision is responsive to and respects diverse cultural needs.
  - Supporting opportunities for learning about, sharing and understanding culture as part of belief, the quality of life and the framework for sustainability.
- To demonstrate that culture and creativity are central to economic prosperity and growth by:
  - Developing a sustainable cultural economy and build on the existing clusters of business in all parts of the region.
  - Ensuring more of the region's citizens gain and sustain employment in the cultural industries through promotion and export, and the exchange of ideas, skills and products.
  - Promoting the benefits of culture & creative innovation to businesses and visitors.
- To build on our inheritance, environment and capacity for innovation by:-
  - Promoting the role of culture in enhancing self-esteem and community pride.
  - Ensuring the regions rich inheritance and contemporary culture is central to the external image.
  - Making culture central to the development of all aspects of our environment.

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## North West Cultural Strategy

The Cultural Strategy for the North West was developed in 2001. It sets out five strategic objectives with key actions for each:

- *Advocacy*: Make the case for the role of culture and creativity within all aspects of regional policy, their role in the quality of life and their capacity to add value to other commercial and industrial sectors.
- *Image*: Make culture central to our self-image and the external marketing of the region as a place to live, learn, work, visit and do business with.
- *Cultural Economy*: Develop a sustainable as well as innovative cultural and creative economy and ensure that talented people are retained and attracted to the region through an integrated and focused approach.
- *Social Economy*: Develop the role of culture in sustainable, healthy communities that work; in education and in employment.
- *Environment*: Promote our heritage and landscape as central to the culture of the region - pride in our diversity, history and sense of place, and its role in developing excellent design and planning in the public realm.

## Lancashire County Council

The mission statement of Lancashire County Council is: 'To make Lancashire a good place to live and work, now and in the future. A place where everybody matters. A place where people can:

- Feel safe.
- Live healthy lives.
- Get help when in need.
- Learn & develop.
- Have jobs and a good standard of living.
- Travel easily and safely.
- Enjoy a high quality environment'.

The County Council is publicly committed to involving local people in decisions that affect them and their communities and ensuring accessible, high quality, value for money services which meet people's needs.

The County Council has led the development of the cultural strategy for Lancashire in consultation with Lancashire District Authorities, along with other key players and its findings and recommendations are reflected in this document.

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

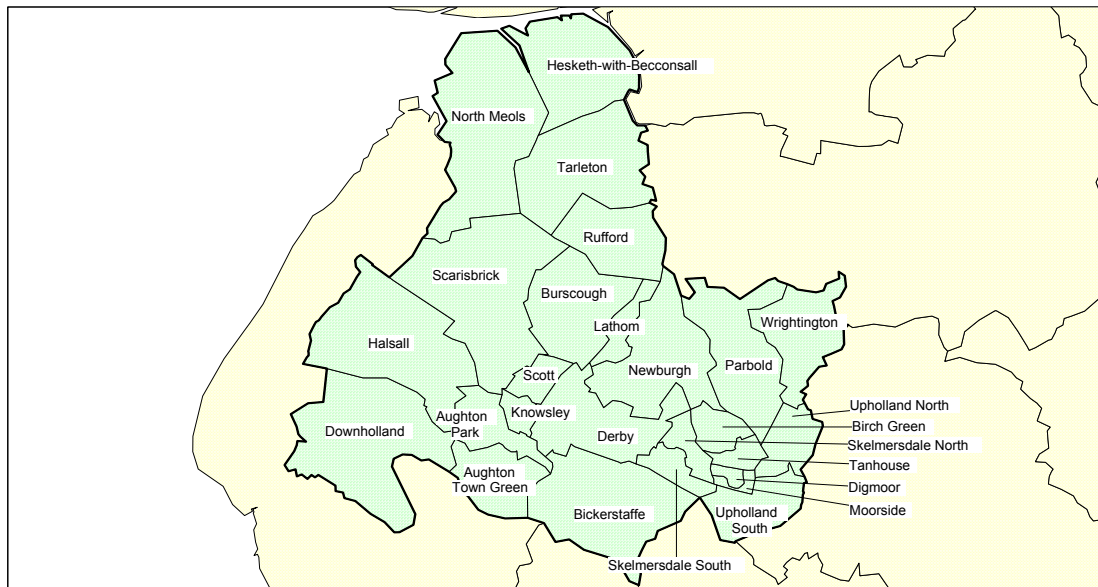
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## WEST LANCASHIRE: DISTRICT PROFILE

### *Demographics*

West Lancashire is one of twelve districts that form the administrative county of Lancashire. It covers 34,688 hectares, a large proportion of which is agricultural land. It is bordered by the Ribble Estuary to the North and the Borough of Sefton to the West. The M58 motorway runs east-west - broadly along the Southern boundary of the District. As shown below, the District comprises 26 wards.

### *West Lancashire District*



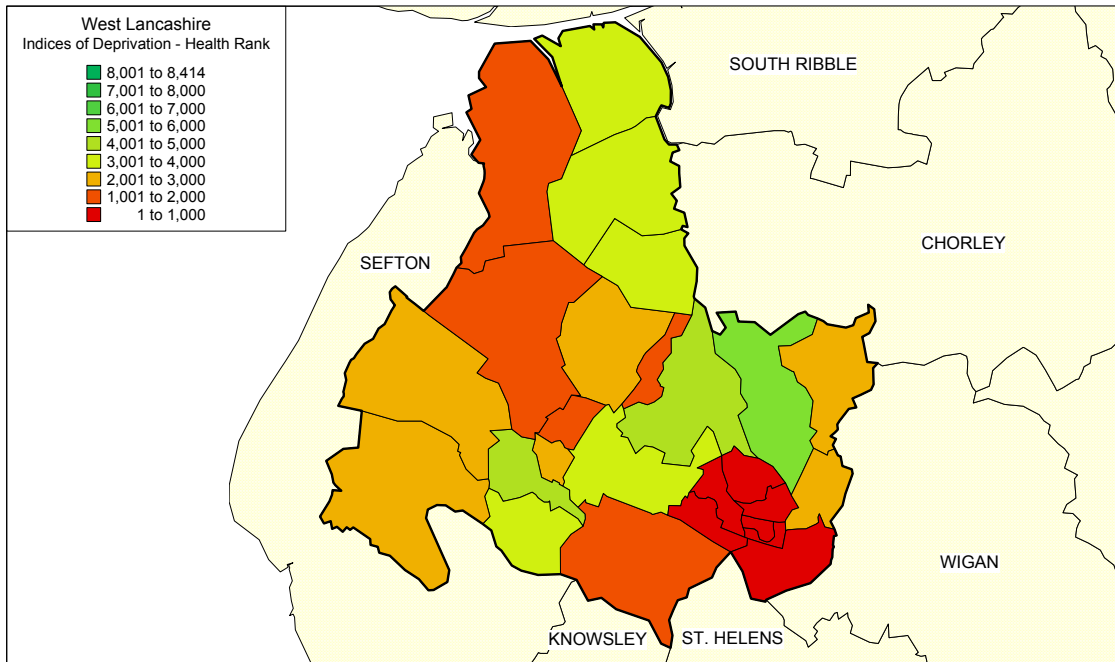
The District has a population of 108,377 residents. It has a slightly higher proportion of female (51.8%) than male (48.2%) residents (2001 Census). Just over half (54.4%) of the population is aged between 25 and 64 years.

West Lancashire has a predominantly white population (99.2%) and slightly higher unemployment rate (3.5%) than the UK average (3.1%). Unemployment, including long term unemployment is, however, higher in Skelmersdale than in any other urban area in Lancashire. A significant majority of residents in West Lancashire are employed in the service industries: Major employers include the Co-operative Bank PLC, Skelmersdale College and Edgehill Community College.

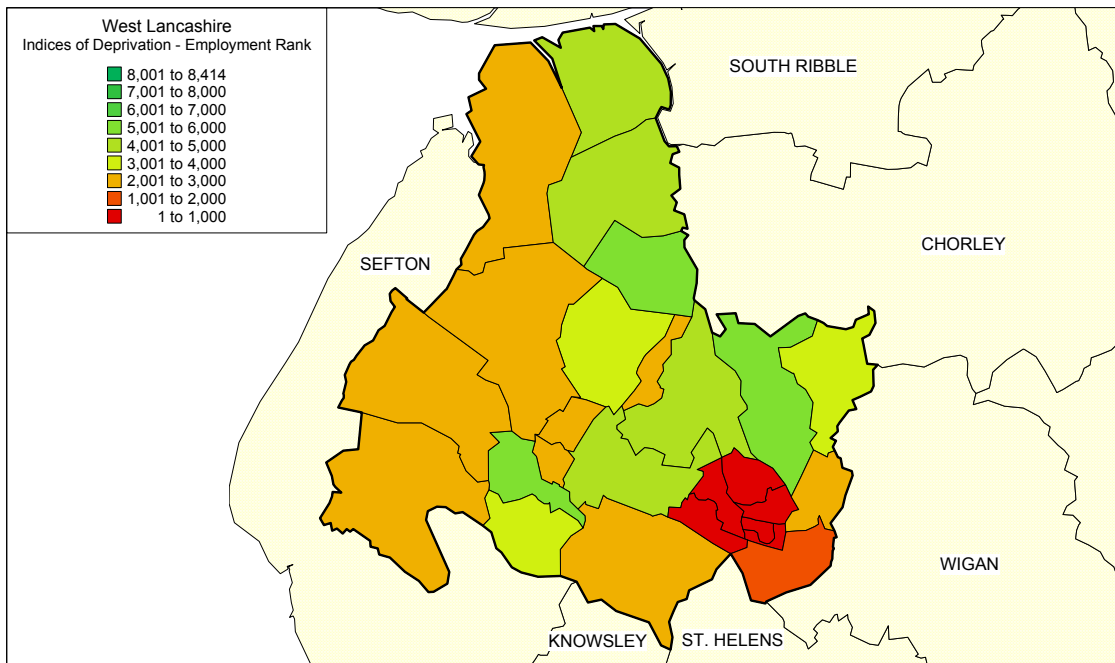
The maps overleaf illustrate IMD rankings of wards within West Lancashire. Overall, this measure ranks West Lancashire as the 99<sup>th</sup> most deprived district (out of 354) in England on a measure of the average of ward scores. Just under a quarter (23%) of the District population lives in wards ranked as the 10% most deprived in the Country.

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

## West Lancashire: IMD indices (health ranking)



## West Lancashire: IMD indices (employment rankings)



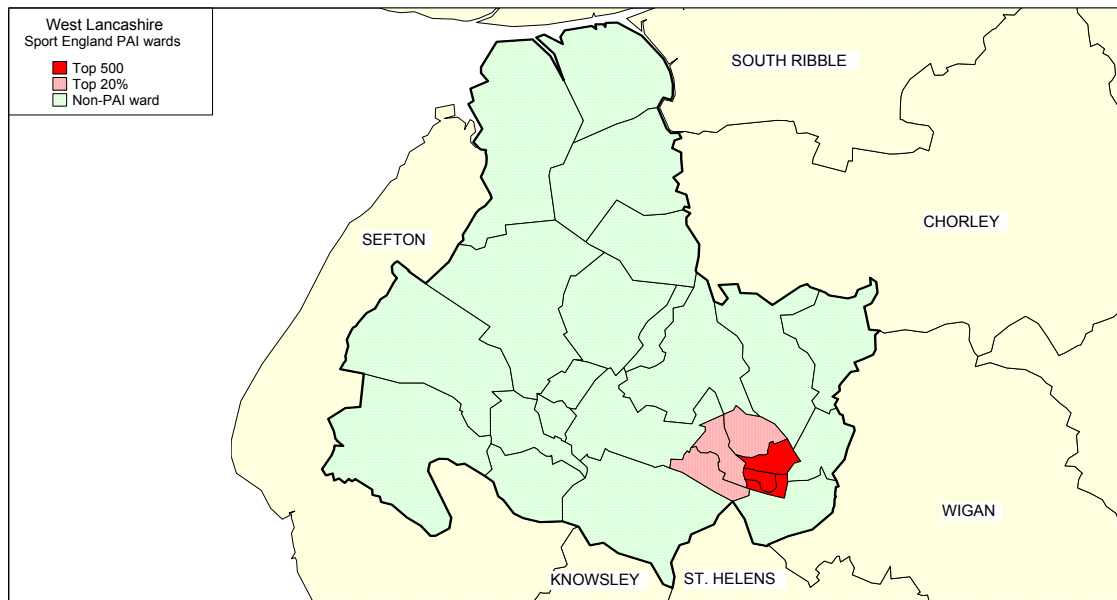
## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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The District's main settlements are the market towns of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale. Of its 26 wards, three are ranked in the top 500 most deprived (out of the overall total of 8,414) wards in England. Three additional wards are ranked (via the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in the top 20% most deprived wards in England. As such, they are designated by Sport England as Priority Area Initiative (PAI) wards. These are as follows:

Ward Name	Rank: IMD
Tanhouse	187
Digmoor	291
Moorside	323
Birch Green	774
Skelmersdale North	1186
Skelmersdale South	1337

### *Sport England PAI wards*



# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## WEST LANCASHIRE: LOCAL CONTEXT

### *WLDC corporate objectives*

The 'vision' of West Lancashire District is 'to put customer services first and build a community second to none'. The Council's stated values are:

- ❑ Putting customers and frontline services first.
- ❑ Listening to, informing and consulting local people.
- ❑ Being open and accountable in the way we make decisions.
- ❑ Embracing innovation and partnership as a way of bringing about step change improvement in our services.
- ❑ Promoting equality of opportunity and valuing the diversity of our communities.
- ❑ Valuing and developing our employees.
- ❑ Ensuring local services offer the best possible value

These guiding principles are the foundation for the Councils' corporate priorities:

- ❑ Protecting and improving the environment.
- ❑ Combating crime and the fear of crime.
- ❑ Working to create good quality jobs for local people.
- ❑ Improving housing and ensuring that there is affordable housing available for local people.
- ❑ Improving access to, and satisfaction with, our services.
- ❑ Improving the health of local communities.
- ❑ Providing opportunities for leisure and culture.

### *West Lancashire Local Plan*

The West Lancashire Local Plan was adopted in December 1999. This contains planning policies and proposals for the whole of the District. It aims to meet the needs of the people who live, work in, or visit West Lancashire whilst protecting and enhancing the environmental assets of the District.

It sets out a number of policies for the control of development within the District. These cover issues relating to housing, employment, retailing & town centres, the green belt, the environment, transport, recreation, leisure & tourism, agriculture, conservation areas, archaeology, listed buildings and community facilities.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Local Agenda 21*

Through the Local Agenda 21 (LS21), residents of West Lancashire are provided with an opportunity to influence actions which may affect them relating to issues such as healthcare, work and the local environment. The aim of the LS21 is to find new ways of making local life more sustainable, improving residents social and economic well-being whilst protecting the natural environment. The Local Agenda brings together the ideas of a diverse range of local people, under nine main topic areas:

- Built Heritage.
- Community Safety.
- Culture, Leisure & Recreation.
- Economy and Work.
- Health.
- Housing and affordability of basic needs.
- Resources.
- Transport and access.
- Wildlife and landscape.

The key issues raised under the theme of 'culture, leisure and recreation' include:

- A need for more readily accessible information about sporting and cultural activities and facilities.
- A need for more partnership working in the planning and provision of services. In particular, a Cultural Partnership is recommended.
- Resources are needed for the provision and upgrading of facilities, particularly in rural areas.
- The employment and economic potential of creative industries, including in relation to inward investment.
- Potential contribution of culture and sport to the image of the District, including direct influence of public art.
- A need to incorporate culture into corporate thinking, by the District Council and others.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Community Strategy (2003 - 2006)*

The Community Strategy for West Lancashire was produced in conjunction with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which was established in 1994. The LSP consists of more than sixty representatives from public, private, voluntary and commercial sectors. It now has considerable breadth and involves all sections of the community. It brings together other partnerships including:

- Community Safety Partnership.
- Local Agenda 21 transport and environmental working groups.
- Health Improvement Programme.
- Lifelong Learning Partnership.
- Representatives from the private business sector and industry.

The Community Strategy sets out eight key strategic priority areas, which are reflected in this Strategy. They include:

- **Combating crime** (i.e. by addressing social and environmental issues affecting local peoples' attitudes and behaviour).
- **Reducing unemployment** (i.e. attracting investment from outside the area).
- **Improving health and social care** (i.e. by making good health and social care available to everyone irrespective of social circumstances).
- **Improving transport in the District** (i.e. by improving public transport provision).
- **Improving education** (i.e. by improving educational attainment within the District).
- **Improving neighbourhoods in West Lancashire** (i.e. by improving housing quality).
- **Enhancing the environment** (i.e. by maintaining and enhancing the local wildlife and wild spaces).
- **Improving leisure opportunities** (i.e. by increasing investment in leisure, culture and sports facilities within the district).

The targets for improving leisure opportunities in West Lancashire, as set out in the Community Strategy, are as follows:

- Undertake a feasibility study on re-developing a leisure centre in West Lancashire by November 2003.
- Review the level of theatre provision in West Lancashire by May 2005.
- Complete phase 1 of work on Ormskirk and Skelmersdale parks by December 2003 and 2004 respectively.
- Develop a pilot youth theatre by December 2003.
- Review pricing policies to increase accessibility of leisure, culture and sports activities by November 2002.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Community Safety Strategy (2002-2005)*

This strategy commits WLDC to making West Lancashire a safer place to live, work and visit. In recent years, the Council has developed a number of innovative schemes to tackle crime and disorder:

- ❑ Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) Teams.
- ❑ CCTV Systems: Town Centre CCTV has led to significant reductions in crime and has recently been extended.
- ❑ Anti-Social Behaviour Unit: This plays a crucial role in raising the quality of life and reducing the fear of crime for the residents of West Lancashire.

Key partners in the West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership include:

- ❑ West Lancashire District Council
- ❑ Lancashire Constabulary
- ❑ Lancashire County Council
- ❑ Elected members from the District, County and various parish councils
- ❑ Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- ❑ Representatives from local Neighbourhood Watch schemes

The Partnership has produced a Crime and Disorder Strategy for West Lancashire (2002-2005) which highlights strategic priorities for tackling community safety within the District over the next three years. Strategic themes include arson, young people, drugs and alcohol, anti-social behaviour and commercial crime.

### *West Lancashire Peoples Panel*

This comprises 1,367 local residents from all age groups and backgrounds. A survey utilising the People's Panel, conducted in summer 2002, covered issues relating to leisure & culture provision within the district. Key findings include:

- ❑ Four-fifths of panel members rate the libraries, and activities involving literature and writing in West Lancashire, as excellent, good or fair.
- ❑ Swimming pools are rated highly.
- ❑ Significantly lower ratings are given for local theatres, arts & crafts facilities, play activities for youngsters and children's playgrounds.
- ❑ More than one third of respondents rate West Lancashire's festivals, events & tourist attractions as poor or very bad.
- ❑ Restaurants and cinemas are the most frequently visited attractions. Theatres, concert halls and tenpin bowling facilities tend to be less popular.
- ❑ A significant majority considered provision of a new multi-screen cinema to be the most significant way of improving cultural provision in the District, followed by a new leisure centre. Relatively low priority was attached to development of ten-pin bowling or a theatre or concert hall.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Ribble Estuary Strategy*

The Ribble Estuary Partnership consists of a number of organisations; local authorities surrounding the Estuary, local interest groups and others including; English Nature, the Environment Agency and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. These work together to promote sustainable Estuary use, enhance its environment and to protect the area from inappropriate development.

WLDC has worked with the Partnership to produce the Ribble Estuary Strategy (which was drawn up in 1997). One of its aims, which is particularly relevant to West Lancashire, is to improve access and information for those residents who live South of the Estuary

### *Lancashire West Partnership*

In 2000, the WLDC Economic Development Unit was involved in developing a sub-regional development agency for the District. Aware of the growth of other sub-regional development agencies in the North West, it was considered important that Lancashire West established its own partnership. It was established to promote and support the growth and prosperity of the District. 2001 saw the first board meeting of this public and private sector partnership and the appointment of its executive director.

### *The Council's erstwhile approach to culture*

WLDC's stated intention, as espoused in its earlier Corporate Cultural Strategy (to function as a facilitator to encourage partnership working and develop a varied cultural infrastructure within the district) is reflected in this wider Cultural Strategy. It has also, in its own words; 'a sport and recreation development role co-ordinating activities ranging from the promotion of national, regional and local sporting initiatives to children's play activities, both formal and informal'.

Initiatives provided to date include co-ordinated summer holiday programmes involving a range of activity providers and the 'Recreational Activities' programme; a scheme developed to encourage positive activities for teenagers throughout the school holidays in a bid to reduce juvenile delinquency.

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## STRATEGIC VISION

The strategic vision for the cultural strategy for West Lancashire and the various disciplines and services to which it applies within the main agencies involved, is outlined under two main 'headings'. These are designed to encapsulate a number of the corporate values and priorities outlined earlier in this document:

1. ***'Providing opportunities for leisure and culture'*** and ***'Building a community second to none'*** are translated into the cultural strategy aim to: Improving the quality, quantity and sustainability of cultural activity - for all residents; and the quality of time spent in the district - for visitors.
2. ***Promoting equality of opportunity and valuing the diversity of our communities has been taken to mean:*** Making additional effort to enhance the quality of life and (via this) the life-chances of people from identified groups in the District.

The third main corporate heading to which reference is made in this document is:

***Ensuring local services offer the best possible value:*** This is interpreted as confirming the need to measure the impact and value of, and the need to secure future investment in, the cultural sector in West Lancashire

This is covered in a more cross-cultural disciplinary context.

Thus, central to the Strategy is the notion that everyone in West Lancashire should have the opportunity to take part in cultural activity.

For many, first experiences of taking part in organised cultural activity occur at school. Helping young people to move from involvement in, or exposure to, a particular activity in a school environment to participation for a local club, society or, via other routes, develop a regular involvement is possibly one of the most important steps in delivering sustainable personal cultural opportunity.

The provision of access routes, and using cultural activity as a vehicle through which to engage people, can impact right across the community in terms of wider educational achievement, health, employment and tackling social exclusion. Priorities for action are required to help ensure that good quality, well-organised opportunity is made available and accessible.

Voluntary sector resources need to be marshalled more effectively and arts, leisure and cultural facilities and programmes more flexibly operated and managed to provide a greater range of opportunities in a manner that improves their accessibility to the whole community.

## SPORT & PHYSICAL RECREATION

### Background

As was stated in the District's Strategy for Sport and Recreation 1997-2001, WLDC and a range of its partners in, for example, the voluntary sector have, over an extended period of time devoted significant resources to providing and maintaining a wide variety of sporting and recreational facilities and services. That Strategy referred to the need to 'refocus the ambitions and resources of all providers in the district to effectively face the challenges of the next few years'.

To an extent continuing that theme, a core requirement of this document is to clarify and define the rationale for investment in sport and recreation. This needs to occur in the context of national and local policy. It must also be geared to ensuring that given the potential for structural change in the District Council over the next few years, sight is not lost of the reason for directly providing, subsidising and supporting services in sport and recreation in West Lancashire.

### Facilities

The District contains several large indoor leisure facilities, provided by the District Council. These offer a range of sporting activities for residents and visitors. They include:

- *Skelmersdale Sports Centre*: Facilities include a five-a-side football pitch, squash, badminton and tennis courts and a 'weights' room.
- *Burscough Sports Centre*: Facilities include two large sport halls; three squash courts; climbing wall; outdoor all-weather floodlit areas; fitness suite; badminton hall; indoor bowling mat and activity rooms.
- *North Meols Community Leisure Centre*: Facilities include a sports hall; gymnasium; fully-equipped fitness suite; floodlit outdoor courts for football, tennis, basketball and netball) and community meeting rooms.
- *Park Pool, Ormskirk*: Facilities include a 25 metre main pool; 12.5 metre learner pool and a fitness & health suite.
- *Nye Bevan Pool, Skelmersdale*: Facilities include a 25 metre pool with two-tier diving board; 17 metre learner pool, sunbeds and fitness/health suite.

In addition to these, major facilities are located at Edge Hill College and Skelmersdale College of Further Education:

- The sports and leisure complex at Skelmersdale College; Facilities include a swimming pool, a large sports hall and a multi-gym. These accommodate activities including; badminton, canoeing, football, netball, squash, tennis, volleyball and swimming. In addition, courses leading to sporting qualifications are held at the complex throughout the year.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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- *Sporting Edge*; is the sports complex located on the main Ormskirk campus of Edge Hill College. Facilities include a four court sports hall; fitness suite; squash court; 7 floodlit tennis courts; 4 soccer/rugby pitches; floodlit netball courts; 6 lane athletics track; cricket square; gymnasium; swimming pool; synthetic floodlit hockey pitch and a synthetic floodlit 5-a-side pitch. A recent (£3.9 million) expansion and upgrade of facilities at the complex was supported by a Sport England Lottery Fund grant of £1.9 million.

### *Outdoor activities*

There are also extensive opportunities for outdoor and countryside activities within the District:

- 'Leisure Lakes' at Mere Brow: This is set in 90 acres of countryside where visitors can take part in water sports such as windsurfing, canoeing, fishing and jet-skiing. Special events include the hovercraft championships and a number of mountain bike races.
- Across the Authority public have access to a number of parks and countryside amenities, country parks, rights of way and other informal recreational areas. Some opportunities are augmented through the Ranger Service, others in partnership with adjacent authorities/agencies.
- Five golf courses, a number of which offer additional facilities. These include; Beacon Park Golf Course, Dean Wood Golf Course, Hurlston Hall, Mossock Hall and Ormskirk Hall.
- The Leeds-Liverpool Canal.

### *Sports development*

WLDC's sports development officer promotes and delivers programmes designed to encourage participation in sport and physical activity among, attract and retain people from different target groups and the various communities within the District. The officer, and associated sports development staff (see below), work in partnership with many external agencies including Sport England, Lancashire Sport, Millennium Volunteers and the Youth Sport Trust (YST).

### *Sport Action Skelmersdale*

Sport Action Skelmersdale (SAS) is a two-year project (which commenced in January 2002). Its aim is to improve sport and recreational opportunities for the Town's residents. It is a collaboration between WLDC, Sport England, Glenburn High School and the Skelmersdale Partnership the aim which is to improve the quality of life and health of local residents. Key objectives include the development of a greater variety of community sport and recreational activities within Skelmersdale and to encourage all residents to take part.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *General preface*

In common with other areas, WLDC should seek to develop its role as a co-ordinator of provision and enabler of sport and recreation opportunities. It is at the hub of a network of agencies focusing on the development of sport, co-ordinating the opportunities provided by local communities, the voluntary sports sector, schools and WLDC itself. In the context of this Strategy, key, overarching aims that permeate all strategy elements include:

- Ensuring the provision of a value for money service that meets the needs of stakeholders in the District.
- Directly addressing inequity in sporting provision (i.e., enhancing provision for groups/areas with identified lower levels of sporting participation).
- Targeting resource at areas with clear, defined deficiency or shortfall.
- Utilising resources to generate beneficial change with organisations, and in places, where the impact (in the strategic context) will be maximised.
- Addressing issues associated with the infrastructure of sport in West Lancashire progressively tackling:
  - Use of facility based resources to support progressive development work.
  - The generation of workable mechanisms to enable those presently least able to access sporting opportunity so to do.
  - The current weaknesses (and 'disconnection') of the voluntary sector and its capacity/willingness to work with groups prioritised by WLDC.
  - The level and quality of performance management information generated across all aspects of work enabling progress to be assessed and resource to be appropriately targeted.

Strategy elements apply across the community and to all sectors. Young people are, however, particularly in the context of sport, a major focus because:

- They are a key priority in Government and Sport England national sports and community strategies.
- The most effective, efficient way of achieving raised levels of involvement in sport is to attract people at an early age and to retain them via the provision of appropriate and personally sustainable opportunities.
- Utilising sport and physical recreation/activity as a key vehicle to combat crime, enhance health and promote social inclusion is most effective when implemented via intervention with young people at an early age.
- Evidence suggests that 'active learners are effective learners' - increasing participation amongst young people of school age is thought to contribute to improving educational attainment.

### SPORT AND RECREATION: QUALITY OF LIFE

#### Lifelong learning and work with schools

Many of the formative opportunities for young people to develop movement literacy and gain primary sporting experience take place in the school and pre-school environment. Encouragement of mechanisms to promote and support the development of sport within the curriculum is given a high priority at a national policy level. Involvement in sport is also, in the context of the cross-cutting issues, seen as an important element of the lifelong learning process.

There is also a need to link with key play strategy priorities; maintaining and further developing links with Sure Start. This has to be followed by constructive, partnership-based work with schools, youth services and providers of post 16 educational opportunities.

Despite specific successes achieved via the work undertaken as part of Community TOPS and work targeted upon known successful clubs (for example in netball, cricket, tennis and rugby), in general school-club links remain weak and underdeveloped in the District. Thus, key strategic issues in relation to work with schools include:

- Continuing to work with, and enhancing the role of, school sport co-ordinator partnerships and their links to other development work.
- The linked development of after-school clubs/activity.
- Enhancing community use of school sites, focusing in particular on schools that are either being supported through the current New Opportunities Fund (NOF) Round 3 funding or that may be involved in the anticipated NOF 4 programme.
- Development of activities that can be sustained outside of school.
- Development of activities, referral processes and mutually beneficial progression mechanisms in tandem with Lancashire Sport.

WLDC should support work designed to ensure that all school pupils in the District receive the 'PE Entitlement'. Work should also be undertaken to ensure that activities offered in curricular time and after-school are planned in the context of, and can be sustained outside school environments by, local club infrastructure.

The District should be cognisant of the results generated by the Lancashire Strata Survey (2001) - based upon a survey of 10,000 young people (then) in Year 9, across all the secondary schools in the County. There will be an opportunity to identify participation trends in the District as this survey will be repeated via the Regional Intelligence Unit commissioned survey in October/November 2003.

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## Facility infrastructure

It is important that WLDC and its partners establish a clear strategy in relation to the management and development of facilities to ensure that local provision of the requisite quality is established and maintained. Major facility issues within West Lancashire need to be resolved. It is also important to note that securing capital funding support from Sport England is likely to be both problematic and may only involve relatively limited sums, over the period of this strategy. Consequently, consideration must be given to alternative sources of finance, including private finance and capital receipts.

Where schools or colleges in West Lancashire open their sports facilities for community use there is no evident link to, and no co-ordination with, District (or other) sports provision.

There is, at present, no mechanism to assess and justify the priority that should be given in the context of WLDC support for its own schemes, or projects put forward by other agencies seeking grant aid. A system for prioritising support is essential to ensure that Council support and external funding is directed at areas and groups contributing to the successful Strategy implementation. It should also ensure that there is no duplication of existing or planned provision.

### Criteria for support

Agency/facility/club:

- Is located in key targeted area/provides activity for people from key targeted areas.
- Has local significance (e.g. potential to contribute to local delivery of Strategy objectives).
- Has demonstrated a commitment to coach education.
- Has demonstrated commitment to encourage the involvement of people with special needs.
- Has commitment to generate/meet demonstrable local demand.
- Encourages membership from (Strategy defined) priority groups in the community.
- Works in partnership with defined key agencies.
- Has membership open to all sections of the community. Offers affordable subscriptions.
- Has commitment to provide coaching for adult and junior members.
- Is committed to developing, junior sections in line with relevant NGB recommendations.
- Provides existing/is committed to establishing links with local primary/secondary schools.
- Has regional/national significance.

WLDC needs to plan strategically for both indoor and outdoor facility provision across all sectors in the District developing a hierarchy of priorities and criteria to assist in determining the level of support offered. This planning will need to extend to a substantially clearer rationale and 'specification' for centre operation to underpin plans to test the appropriateness of externalising the operation of leisure facilities either in partnership with a commercial contractor or to a non-profit distributing organisation or a trust.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Generation of closer working relationship with schools operating community use to ensure provision is complementary to other sports provision in West Lancashire and that they, for example, operate according to broadly the same programming and pricing principles as other facilities in the District.

The potential to develop a central programming co-ordination mechanism for WLDC managed, school and college sports facilities across the District should be considered and, for example, utilised to inform County Council driven planning for the likely upcoming New Opportunities Fund PE and Sport Round 4 capital funding process.

Key issues to be addressed include the fact that the projected 'life' of Skelmersdale Leisure Centre is short. Planning for its replacement should incorporate consideration of the option to replace both it and Nye Bevan Pool in favour of a new major multi-use venue.

There is an opportunity to fit such a project into/with other strategies and agendas. It could, for example, be used as a lever for investment in enhancing/increasing use of walking/cycling routes into/out of Skelmersdale. It could also be part of wider plans for the regeneration of Skelmersdale town centre via, for example, development of a new sports facility incorporating additional arts, film, conference and training facilities.

Such a scheme that might, in a national context, be a model for sport and cultural relevance to regeneration and environmental agendas and conforms well with the, highly regarded, one-stop-shop type facilities being planned and implemented in areas such as Sunderland and Coventry.

### **Parks, countryside and recreational open space**

West Lancashire is, essentially, a rural district. It has, for an authority of its size, a rich variety of open space and countryside provision - a substantial proportion of which is managed and maintained by WLDC. Provision is extensive and ranges from its network of country parks and water amenities, important woodland areas, urban parks, 'green corridors', amenity green space, play areas, sports pitches and non-pitch based sports provision.

Skelmersdale, in particular, by virtue of its origins as a 'new town' has an extensive network of green open space. Some of this has recreational value and potential, some is more 'decorative' in its presence and relevance - contributing to the image rather than the recreational potential of the locality.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Countryside and informal outdoor recreation provision*

Outdoor recreation and countryside facilities are important to the area. The Authority's partnership with parish councils and Lancashire County Council, linked to its role in rights of way maintenance makes it strategically important in a wider sense, as does its contributions to River Douglas and Leeds Liverpool Canal programmes.

WLDC is heavily dependent upon partnership-based resources to support the investment that has been made in its countryside and outdoor recreation resources particularly given the restrictions placed upon its own capital expenditure on this area of provision over the last 3-4 years. Key funding partners include:

- ❑ Lancashire County Council
- ❑ Countryside Agency
- ❑ English Nature
- ❑ Agencies involved in the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme (e.g. Lancashire Environmental Fund).
- ❑ Environment Agency
- ❑ North West Development Agency

WLDC manages a number of country parks and promotes activities and access for local residents and tourists through its Countryside Ranger Service. In addition it is involved in a range of environmental projects with other Lancashire Authorities. At the moment it also is responsible for maintaining a range of rights of way through agreement with Lancashire County Council.

Key countryside sites include:

- ❑ Abbey Lakes - Up Holland.
- ❑ Beacon Country Park - Up Holland.
- ❑ Cheshire Lines Path - Downholland.
- ❑ Dean Wood - Up Holland.
- ❑ Fairy Glen - Appley Bridge.
- ❑ Platts Lane Lake - Burscough.
- ❑ Ruff Wood - Ormskirk.
- ❑ Tawd Valley Country Park - Skelmersdale.

Three proposed new sites are at:

- ❑ Burscough Community Woodland.
- ❑ Chequer Lane Lake - Up Holland.
- ❑ Hunters Hill Quarry- Hilldale.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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The Countryside and Outdoor Recreation Section has a wide remit. Through its ranger service it is responsible for educational and activity programmes at, and connected with these sites. In addition it carries out non-routine maintenance (complementing the grounds maintenance function).

Although the Ranger Service is directly involved in marketing, promoting access and interpretation, research suggests that the main issues of concern for the public at countryside sites are litter/litter bins and parking. These areas are the responsibility of the LCA Section. This suggests opportunities for more integrated working. Similarly, elsewhere WLDC Environmental Service Section is working with Grounds Maintenance to streamline delivery. Where this does, or may, impact on service quality at countryside site, planning would usefully involve the LCA Service/Countryside and Outdoor Recreation Manager.

Achieving a workable, value for money balance between improving and maintaining facilities is crucial. Like a number of other functions within LCA, supporting and delivering alongside other agencies is part of accepted working practice. The range of work and opportunities and the involvement of a number of WLDC and other agencies means, however, that strategic planning and investment in this area of provision must be properly co-ordinated

### ***Parks***

The District contains a number of important urban parks. There is a key need, given corporate policy contexts relating to environment, health and combating crime and fear of crime, to ensure that they are (become) 'active environments'.

Current and potential users need to be engaged with, and 'own' not only the physical environment of the park but to be party to the range of activities that can, on both a complementary and an exclusive basis, be accommodated.

Parks are, both nationally and locally, recognised to be a key element in local image enhancement and are a key facet of local regeneration policy in West Lancashire. Investment in parks infrastructure, supported by initial and ongoing community involvement and engagement will be key to the Authority's delivery of its 'services first' policy in the context of this aspects of provision.

The component elements in parks management, maintenance, development and use are managed by different Council functions. There is a degree of dislocation between various 'servicing' elements and, as a result, the net impact of investment in parks' provision is not presently being maximised.

### *Outdoor sports and non-pitch based sports provision*

The Best Value report suggests that there is over-provision of outdoor pitches in the District. This may be the case, but consultation also suggests that the quality of District pitches and associated ancillary facilities may be suppressing demand. Current usage levels are probably not, on this basis, representative of the true picture.

### *Partnerships and linkages*

Work linked to developing and maintaining facilities, including more fully integrating local communities in the sites close to where they live, promoting educational links (through a wide programme of school based visits) and supporting tourism visits to the District is, within the resource limitations that apply, given high priority.

Work with, for example, youth and community service providers can yield significant local benefit, linked to increased local ownership, complementing crime reduction initiatives, supporting holiday programmes etc. Similar benefits are attached to health issues, GP referral and, healthy walking programmes.

The managed countryside resource in WLDC is a key element in leisure tourism. Because of this, in similar situations many local authorities are placing LCA (or equivalent services) close to the economic development planning and management process.

The size of the workforce and the revenue budget available makes innovative and collaborative working very important. Work with the Lancashire Groundwork Trust, for example, has allowed a ranged of effective volunteer and visitor promotion work to be undertaken.

The District clearly requires an overarching strategy for countryside and open space provision. This should incorporate strategic plans for the following elements:

- ❑ Urban parks.
- ❑ Countryside, rights of way and tourism related infrastructure.
- ❑ Open space and amenity greenspace.
- ❑ Playing pitches and non-pitch sports provision.
- ❑ Play areas.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### *Related strategic issues*

WLDC should meet its statutory responsibility and ensure that decisions about pitch stock (and play and open spaces) are taken on the basis of a proper understanding of need and demand. To this end, a District open spaces and playing pitch strategy, adhering to the principles espoused in the PPG 17 Companion Guidance, should be commissioned.

Work to develop locally accessible provision such as informal sports areas, multi-use games areas and skating facilities has already been initiated. This will be further developed through the Green Spaces Community Play Space bid. The role of such areas in community safety and capacity building needs to be assessed and recognised and the possibility of developing a network of such facilities throughout the District should be explored.

The parks-based pilot project element of the 'Street-scene, Green & Clean' Initiative which will concentrate in the first instance on Richmond Park in Burscough and Coronation Park in Ormskirk should be used to evaluate the potential of genuine integrated management of the District's urban park resource. It should:

- Be predicated upon a baseline assessment of present activity, local significance, relevance to various segments of the community, 'usage time-zoning' etc.
- Be utilised to test the impact to be gained from improved service integration covering elements such as access, community relevance, local image enhancement, usage relevance and frequency etc.

Countryside and outdoor recreation should be recognised in (or lead on) an integrated planning process to ensure the strategic and effective distribution and use of resources. WLDC (and where applicable, parish councils, residents' groups and voluntary sector providers) should work to progressively remove some of the vertical and departmental barriers that presently exist, in the pursuit of 'services first' led, effectiveness and efficiency.

### **Links to regeneration**

Regeneration work undertaken by WLDC needs to recognise and embrace the central role of culture. LCA and associated sporting and cultural agencies should be more central to, and more actively included in, bidding processes and/or development of schemes driven by wider regeneration objectives.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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A proactive approach could bring access to major resources for the development of sport. In many cases, areas with social/economic priority coincide with areas of low sports participation. Work needs to focus on identifying ways in which sport can be used to meet the objectives of individual regeneration initiatives.

Notwithstanding the good quality of some of the work undertaken to date to secure external funding, consideration should be given either to the identification of a dedicated officer within the LCA service to work proactively in seeking funding from regeneration initiatives and other funding agencies.

### **WLDC staffing infrastructure**

It is vital that staff whether working in service management, facility management, sports development, countryside recreation or play understand core service goals and their actual/potential contribution to delivery and improvement. To this end, service segregation and delineation should be progressively de-emphasized. A quality service necessitates emphasis upon enabling 'front-of-house' staff to inform and advocate, ensuring that actual and potential clients find out about provision across all elements. This necessitates enhancement of cross-discipline understanding and skills and improved 'vertical' and 'horizontal' communication.

A more targeted, focused approach to 'the business of sports development' and the establishment of productive partnerships with local voluntary sports clubs and groups needs to be part of this approach. Some of this has occurred in Skelmersdale, in part because of the additional, limited term (SRB5/Sport England Active Communities Development Fund) resource available.

The challenge presented needs to be reflected in the roles and responsibilities of development staff if the Strategy is to make a difference to a wider range of (particularly young) people in West Lancashire. There is also a need to consider whether, how and the core rationale to justify mainstreaming SAS staff.

Consideration should be given to how sports development is to be structured, managed and placed to ensure that its work fits (and to an extent drives) the corporate rationale for the service. This will need to incorporate consideration of:

- ❑ The need for a more senior strategic post to co-ordinate sports development provision across the Authority.
- ❑ The potential impact upon, the views of, and possibly the inclusion of the sports development function in, service externalisation.
- ❑ Issues associated with mainstreaming the work/functions of the staff employed in the SAS.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Longer-term, the LCA Service should plan to move to a position where staff roles - in facilities, 'field' environments, marketing, inter-agency work and with clients and customers incorporate understanding of corporate and divisional policy drivers. As a result they should, over time, move to a position where they are able to represent and promote this range of opportunities at all times with various community representatives.

This will be enhanced by a clearer, more widely appreciated service rationale. It will also be enhanced by the exposure of staff to different work areas, staff involvement in cross-service reviews, improved communication frequency and devices - ensuring that performance is measured and information presented in a cross-divisional context.

### **Community safety**

National evidence indicates that involvement in sport reduces the chances of young people committing crime and reduces levels of re-offending. The West Lancashire CSP comprises a range of agencies. These include:

- ❑ WLDC
- ❑ Lancashire Constabulary
- ❑ Youth Justice Board
- ❑ Crime Stoppers
- ❑ Youth Offending Team
- ❑ Probation Service
- ❑ Skelmersdale Partnership
- ❑ The Health Authority
- ❑ West Lancashire Economic Forum
- ❑ Parish & town councils
- ❑ The Women's Refuge group
- ❑ Lancashire Police

Young people are identified as the key element in the CSP Strategy and are high on all the list of all the partners involved. Priorities in West Lancashire include tackling youth crime and substance misuse. Although the overall level of crime is relatively low, there are several crime hotspots across the District at which targeted work could be directed.

The profile, and relevance of the work of the CSP is increasing. There is an opportunity to focus sports resources on supporting partnership work and ensuring that facilities, development staff and, as appropriate, voluntary sector resources are made available to do this.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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The critical ingredient in 'breaking the cycle' is thought to be the quality of opportunity made available. If the CSP can offer quality intervention through the partners and information is monitored, evaluated and shared then its influence is likely to grow in the area of increased participation in a whole host of cultural activities.

This would then link to the strategic priorities of the Council and be part of making the case for increased, or at least maintained investment in the sector (rather than the continuous pressure upon budgets and programmes).

Work undertaken by WLDC and partners should, over the lifetime of the Strategy, become progressively more geared to providing support to agencies working to reduce crime. Youth, community and other outreach staff should be encouraged to use sports facilities and activities to accommodate programmes geared to the delivery of other social objectives. This might, for example, include work with sports clubs to support them to take on identified potential/actual offenders (on an individual referral basis) as members.

Consideration could be given to, for example:

- ❑ Investigating the feasibility of developing the Recreational Activity Programme (RAP) and the 'RAP-PlusPlus' partnership to take a wider overview of partnership working and individual referral to diversionary activity programmes.
- ❑ Evaluating the potential to extend some of the informal work undertaken by Skelmersdale Sports Action by opening key sports facilities to local young people on a free entry, 'drop-in' basis on Friday/Saturday/Sunday evenings.
- ❑ Encourage sports clubs to provide places for those at risk of offending (on an individual referral basis) linked to referral from YOT, the Police, exclusion officers and schools.
- ❑ The provision of training for selected facility managers and operational staff for dealing with disaffected youngsters.
- ❑ Placing emphasis upon the gathering of data and measurement to demonstrate the effectiveness (and relevance) of the impact of this work for presentation to key policy and decision-makers.

### Health and fitness

A significant level of work is being designed to improve the health of residents in the District. Some existing work with adults and GP referred groups undertaken in and through sports facilities in the District is considered to be of good quality for those whom programmes have involved.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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There is, however, a need to review current health initiatives to ensure that maximum benefit is achieved, particularly in the context of concentrating on the generation of improvement in parts of the District with clearly evidenced poor levels of health.

The promotion of exercise and fitness, particularly within schools is an opportunity to encourage positive sport/activity habits. It is particularly relevant for girls, many of whom demonstrate greater interest in lifestyle based activities than in traditional team sports. In this context, developing fitness-related activity as a 'sports-specific' programme should be considered.

Introducing young people to keep fit/exercise to music and cardio-vascular based training at schools via referral to appropriately timed, supervised, structured and priced opportunities at WLDC or schools-based sports facilities could substantially reduce the level of drop-out, particularly among girls at Key Stages 3 and 4. There is an opportunity to further develop the pilot project operating with Upholland, Lathom, Our Lady Queen of Peace and Priory high schools to introduce young people to supervised cardio-vascular based training activity at the District Council's fitness facilities.

Consideration should be given to making development of fitness provision for the actually/ potentially unhealthy and unwell a priority for LCA by, for example:

- ❑ Extending existing GP referral arrangements to cover all WLDC facilities.
- ❑ Introducing a young person's 'referral' scheme, specifically designed to tackle issues such as youth obesity.
- ❑ Developing operational mechanisms that, as a matter of course, support delivery of health improvement across the community.

WLDC staff and other agencies should support and promote young peoples' access to facilities and identified courses/activity sessions. Consideration should be given to specific relaxation of age stipulations relating to the use of fitness facilities and attendance at classes, linked to the presence of suitably qualified and experienced instructors. Use of class-based inductions, or relaxation of current charging policy for inductions for targeted groups, should also be considered.

Because of the relatively high level of 'drop-out' of young people and difficulties experienced in attracting girls into 'mainstream' sporting activity, consideration should be given to expansion of the existing programme operating at four high schools. This could, given greater emphasis on girls, evolve into a comprehensive District programme specifically aimed at encouraging girls aged 13-16 to take more exercise.

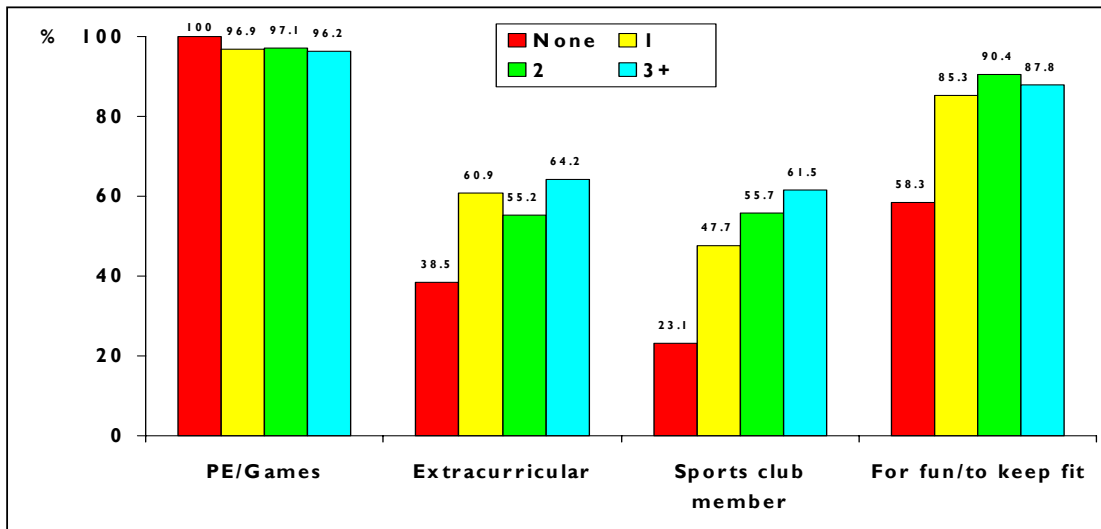
# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## Rurality and access

Although a substantial proportion of the population is based in the main market towns, the District also contains substantial rural areas. These present a particular problem; delivering activity to small numbers across a wide area. The rurality of parts of the District is exacerbated by poor transport links.

### *Impact of household car ownership on sports participation among young people*



WLDC and partners must, when planning, developing and implementing facilities, activities and projects take account of the specific issues associated with the need to travel further and for longer to access opportunity.

## SPORT AND RECREATION: TARGETING EFFORT

### Partnership working

It is not possible, practical or desirable for WLDC to be solely responsible for the development of sport (or cultural activity) in the West Lancashire area. This will be achieved most effectively through all agencies working in partnership. To achieve this, WLDC needs to position itself as a key enabler. Key partners include:

- ❑ Lancashire County Council
- ❑ Lancashire Sport.
- ❑ Parish/town councils.
- ❑ Voluntary sports clubs.
- ❑ Community regeneration agencies and initiatives.

Partnership based delivery of Strategy objectives is a priority. Genuine partnership work is the key to effective resource allocation, extending awareness and availability of cultural services and ensuring appropriate consultation and community involvement. It must, however, be linked to realistic evaluation of partner capacity, and clear mutual rationale for partnership that relates to the objectives and respective interests of each of the agencies involved.

### Pricing

Current pricing policy is not set up to enable WLDC to ensure that subsidy (or flexible elements within it) is targeted at those most in need or those with low levels of sporting participation. Attempts to test the price elasticity of the market for the various service elements offered have, to date, been very limited.

The Sporting Concepts report (2000) highlights a need to increase prices to boost income. It does not, however, frame its recommendations in the context of the need to ensure that this would enable greater flexibility to, where required, allow flexibly managed reduced price access. This is important if services are to cater for WLDC generated targeted groups, or more generically for 'the unwell' or people on low incomes, via some form of leisure card driven system.

Present pricing policy means that subsidy is not, in an equity or a generic Best Value context, directed at who most need it. A more comprehensive and fundamental review of pricing policy should be considered, geared to ensuring that prices reflect the varying ability to pay within West Lancashire. Increased pricing flexibility is required to enable identified priority groups to be given assistance to access facilities and opportunities.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Work is being undertaken in other areas to develop more sophisticated pricing, performance measurement and front-of-house ICT systems. WLDC should review good practise elsewhere and, in the medium-term, target the enhancement of its own systems.

Such a system should also enable the District to test 'price elasticity' for the current facility user base and assess the capacity of the service to increase the cost of facility use for certain groups. This would enable the service to counteract any impact that pricing realignment may have on overall income levels.

### Leisure card

At present, WLDC does not operate a leisure card. A limited swimming discount is available to single parents on benefit. The 1997-2001 Sport and Recreation Strategy for West Lancashire clearly references the need to develop what it terms a 'Passport to Leisure' scheme for the District. This has not happened. Since 1997, the national policy emphasis on the use of sport and cultural activity to enhance inclusion and health, and WLDC's own corporate objectives would appear to make the fact that the District does not have such a scheme in operation a clear gap. It does, however, give West Lancashire the opportunity to learn lessons from work undertaken by other local authorities on this subject.

### *Leisure Card - Issues for consideration in development*

A strong leisure card is an effective mechanism to assist in the equitable delivery of services. It can support intervention work and the targeting of provision at identified individuals/groups. In developing a leisure card, the following should be considered:

- Whether it provides quality management information on who uses/does not use services/facilities in West Lancashire.
- Whether it will enable WLDC to measure the impact of programmes and inform its future marketing activity.
- The strengths and weaknesses of swipecard/smart-card systems; for example; are cards relatively low cost - enabling them to be distributed free of charge - or at very low cost?
- Does the system enable subsidy to be targeted at people without stigma.
- Does it offer flexibility; enabling card-holders to access activities, promotions and specific services for variable time periods and for different 'membership' periods.
- Can it be linked to other initiatives and programmes, for example:
  - Diet tracking - in schools
  - Use of public transport

Within the context of a clearly understood rationale for the targeting of subsidy and clarity about management and performance measurement information requirements, WLDC should explore the feasibility of developing a comprehensive leisure card system. Any such review should take account of the development and introduction of the Connexions card and the ongoing expansion and development of the Lancashire Invest to Save Project (ISP).

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### Facility programming

Although there is a management orientation to improve the sports and junior development of their programmes, a substantial proportion of peak-time and general activity still makes only a limited contribution to the development of sport in the District. Some work, at Skelmersdale, has been undertaken to develop links between facilities and local sports development programmes. Mechanisms to increase the developmental content of centre programmes are needed. This should not be regarded as the sole responsibility of the SDU or just concentrated in low demand periods at centres.

There is a need for a criteria-led facility allocation process, whereby priorities could be determined according to something akin to those illustrated in the table below;

#### Priority criteria

Indicative approved user group/club/agency/activity priority criteria						
Criteria	Very good	Good	Avg.	Below avg.	Poor	Multiplier
Club/group conformity to WLDC aims	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x2
Demonstrable provision orientation/planned response to local need/demand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x2
Extent and breadth of coaching provision planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-participants (introductory)</li> <li>▪ Juniors</li> <li>▪ Women &amp; girls</li> <li>▪ People with physical and sensory impairment</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Potential overall sports development impact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Potential impact on health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Significance; specific <i>target groups</i> (girls, young people from targeted communities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X2
Significance; people from <i>defined disadvantaged areas</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X2
Significance; referred disaffected young people (excluded, those with ASBOs etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X3
Significance; (priority sports).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X1
Significance: Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X1.5
Demonstration of effective partnership to deliver WLDC priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1

It would also be of value to implement an annual facility programming audit and to identify minimum levels of provision for under represented groups. This should be conducted by a cross-service review in tandem with key partner agencies.

### Targeting young people

Involvement in sport, and using sport as a vehicle through which to engage young people, can impact right across communities in terms of improving access and hence addressing wider issues linked to educational achievement, health and social exclusion. Operating practice in West Lancashire should to be more geared to liaison, both directly with young people and with the agencies that work with them in a range of community settings. Voluntary sports resources are also vitally important in the context of offering opportunities in selected activities.

Placing emphasis on inclusion-based provision for young people requires positive policies, programming and staff attitudes. The following should be considered:

- ❑ A review of the training provided for LCA staff and managers, administrators and coaches operating in voluntary sector settings in the context of their 'comfort' dealing with young people.
- ❑ Identification of (appropriate) LCA staff across the division to be given responsibility for developing links with specific schools and clubs.
- ❑ A range of young 'mystery visitors' to be used to assess centre/club/programme atmosphere and responsiveness to young people.

Specific service areas should be highlighted where the provision of targeted subsidy, additional individual support, advice and information is appropriate to ensure that young people have:

- ❑ Equal choice when accessing sport and developing participation habits.
- ❑ Equal (and quality) opportunities to maintain and develop their involvement in sport.

### Targeting other under represented groups

Delivery of sporting opportunity in the context of social exclusion deserves particular attention. Exclusion from sport and the wider issues that lead to (and reinforce) wider, more fundamental exclusion from community activity are closely linked. Sports participation does not prevent social exclusion but the process of access, contribution and participation in sport can support a process of inclusion.

#### *Girls*

The Lancashire Strata survey illustrates that girls in West Lancashire have significantly lower levels of extracurricular participation (54% as opposed to 63%) and sports club membership/attendance at a regular organised session (46% as opposed to 55%) than boys. Work is required to address this.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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A focus upon programmes to cater for the sporting needs and aspirations of girls is required. Consideration should be given to this incorporating, for example:

- Review of schools' extracurricular programmes to ensure that they reflect what is realistically locally available outside school.
- Direct work in/with facilities to specifically promote, opportunities in activities such as dance and aerobics and the incorporation of structured, introductory exercise opportunities for girls in holiday programmes.
- Work with secondary school teachers to encourage positive referral of girls to programmes and opportunities provided, targeting those in key areas.

### *Work in areas of defined deprivation*

There is a need for a longer-term sports development (and associated inter-divisional) focus upon key areas where opportunities to participate are restricted (e.g., by economic/social deprivation; in Skelmersdale). The SAS is, of course, in place to address such issues. Its tenure is, however, limited and there is, in any case, a need for a strategic approach to prioritising areas and issues, where there is significant value in change and improvement.

As part of a corporate commitment to provide access to sport opportunities for all residents, specific areas for additional support, advice and facilities should be designated to ensure that designated residents/groups have equal choice when considering participation and equal opportunity to maintain and develop their involvement in sport.

### *People with physical and sensory impairment*

Some work is undertaken to support provision for disability sport in West Lancashire. For example; the West Lancashire Sports and Social Club for the Disabled receives free pool time each week, along with free lifeguard cover. The Council has supported the development of the West Lancashire Disability Sports Forum which operates as a multi-sports club. It has also signed up to Lancashire Public Service Agreement targets relating to access to recreation among young people with disabilities

The Council will need to ensure that the work it has done, and is doing is recognised. It also needs to ensure that expertise available through this work is recognised and to counter the wider impression of limited awareness about, and activity focused upon, catering for disabled people in the District.

Active support for development of sporting opportunity for disabled people in the District should be maintained. There is a need for a clearer rationale for the work undertaken if appropriate and effective programmes to cater for the sporting needs and aspirations of disabled people are to be provided.

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Work to be considered should include:

- Setting specific targets to increase participation by disabled people.
- Ensuring that special schools are fully involved in school-club links work.
- Undertake a physical and 'attitudinal' access audit of West Lancashire sports facilities/programmes/clubs using disabled mystery visitors.
- Develop (and set targets for) disability awareness training for coaches, club administrators, volunteers and managers/staff at WLDC facilities.

### *The 'looked after' sector*

Sport is well placed to help improve the quality of life for children in the 'looked after' sector. There is clear potential for the development of greater links between the delivery of sports services and this sector.

There is potential to incorporate 'looked after' children into work programmes through closer work with County Social Services/other agencies. There is a need to identify and make specific provision available for 'looked after' young people and the family and/or workers involved in the foster care settings or residential units in which they live. WLDC and partners can give priority to 'looked after' young people via assisted (and priority) access to provision such as holiday play and recreation schemes and swimming lessons.

### *The over 55s*

This group is a priority for the Government and for regional and local health agencies. Much can be achieved via an improved service gearing and a more proactive promotional approach to service delivery for people in this age group.

Specific provision geared to the presentation, availability and pricing/promoting according to defined need, of the over 55s should be built into the consideration of proactive service operation (e.g. GP Referral), pricing and leisure card mechanisms. Consideration should also be given to the present WLDC orientation, its overall referral or information transfer based capacity and the relationship between LCA and key health agencies in the District.

### *People from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups*

This group is traditionally under-represented in the context of engagement with and participation in, cultural activity.

Specific consideration should be given to the nature and basis of proactive WLDC service functions and the criteria applied to determining the priority for support for work with partners in the context of provision for people from BME groups.

# WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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## Determining priority sports/activities

Effectively targeting support and resources underpins the development of robust, sustainable opportunities to participate in sport. The key is work with individual sports in a co-ordinated way, possibly through several clubs in different locations. Prioritising sports is important in the West Lancashire context, where work is undertaken across a mix of rural areas and market towns, to ensure that the impact of resource applied is maximised.

Local club and facility infrastructure means that it is probably not practical to develop all nine of the 'Active' sports (around which the District's partnership in Lancashire Sport is, in part, based). For example, consultation suggests that the quality of the District's football pitches and ancillary is presently delimiting local capacity to offer girl's football at the appropriate level. The District should identify the sports upon which it wishes to concentrate to feed young people up to and through the Active Sports process.

Priority sports should be identified. This does not mean that other sports are overlooked but that those identified are, based upon specific criteria, proactively rather than reactively supported.

### *Proposed criteria; selection of priority sports*

Criteria: Sports/activities that offer:	High	Fairly high	Avg.	Below avg.	Low	Multiple
Established club/progression infrastructure in West Lancs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1
Existing level of success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1
Capacity to cater for men and women equally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1.5
Coaching provision providing pathway to higher performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1
Suitability to support delivery of Strategy objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 2
Council/club based facilities presently available in District.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 2
Immediate potential to access/develop facilities in District.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1
Strong, sustainable opportunities for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 2
Access/and infrastructure that caters for people with physical and sensory impairment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1.5
Open access (the nature, and costs, of participation, do not restrict access to District residents).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1
Potential to significantly improve the range and quality of opportunity for young people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 2
'Lancashire Sport' <sup>1</sup> designation & associated County structures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 2
NGB commitment to working in West Lancashire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X 1

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## Youth Service

There is considerable, as yet not fully exploited opportunity to work with the Youth Service. Youth services provide a range of sporting opportunities. These need to be integrated into existing provision to ensure effective use of resources.

Issues to be addressed include improvement of practical, effective links between youth clubs and sports clubs/facilities/sports development in the District and West Lancashire's participation in the County Invest to Save Project (ISP).

## Swimming

Approximately 7% of young people in West Lancashire class themselves as poor/non-swimmers. This is comparable with similar local authorities in the County. The rationale for provision of water space needs, however, to be more clearly enunciated. Thus, provision remains a priority from the perspective of community safety and as an important activity in the context of improving health.

In addition, the 2001 Lancashire Strata survey relating to the swimming ability of young people at 13 years of age does not catch figures that reflect the impact of the relatively recent disruption in schools swimming teaching. This followed the delegation of budgets (and responsibility) for this from the County Council to local schools.

Linked to a wider assessment of District facility provision, WLDC policy (and subsequent practice) on swimming should be reviewed to assess the extent to which, for example:

- The rationale for provision and subsidy is clear
- A corporate approach to swimming teaching ensures consistency and quality of provision and that young people are educated in water safety.
- Levels of ability to swim among young people are improved from the 2001 level.

## Partnership with Lancashire Sport

West Lancashire is part of Lancashire Sport and WLDC makes a partnership contribution to the County partnership. Lancashire Sport has expanded its remit beyond delivery of Active Sports and is working to expand its wider County partnership function working with local authorities and other bodies in seeking to address a range of sporting and socially driven agendas.

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Given the likelihood that certain national funding streams will be directed via this route and the concomitant potential expansion of the role of the county partnerships, WLDC should continue to work closely with Lancashire Sport. At the same time, the District must identify and focus upon areas where working with Lancashire Sport will provide added value to its existing provision.

West Lancashire should actively maintain (and build upon) its partnership in Lancashire Sport. Full participation in Lancashire Sport is particularly important to ensure that the District gains the maximum benefit from the investment that will, over the next few years be channelled into sport via this route.

### Work with the voluntary sports sector

Just over half of 12-13 year olds in West Lancashire (50.7%) indicated that they belong to a sports club or regularly attend some form of organised activity outside schools (Lancashire Sport Strata Survey 2001). Although this is broadly comparable with other local authorities in the south of the County, the club network and other opportunities for substantial out of school involvement in West Lancashire need further development to provide attractive, good quality outlets for young people.

The strength of the voluntary sports sector in West Lancashire varies considerably. The District has some well-organised, strong and sustainable clubs but has a many others with limited aspirations or capacity to grow. Work to strengthen the voluntary sector is vital.

Consultation with more than 30 voluntary sports organisations as part of the consultation for this Strategy, to some extent mirrors that undertaken with arts groups. It indicates that the following is required:

- Assistance for organisations that are keen to improve junior development and create positive development links with local schools.
- Support for voluntary organisations to recruit, and retain volunteers to support administration and management.
- Improved awareness of funding options, eligibility criteria and application processes.
- Better publicised WLDC information and support points.
- Support to evaluate options to expand and improve facilities to cope with existing and/or anticipated demand.
- WLDC supported/orchestrated links with, and between, schools.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Work to strengthen the voluntary sector is vital. Sport England's 'Clubmark' accreditation provides a framework for this and identifies basic levels of provision to which clubs should aspire.

Club development work needs to be supported, facilitated (and to an extent, rewarded) by policy changes, (e.g., revision of booking procedures at facilities, utilisation of criteria in awarding grants or terms and conditions attached to any grant aid). There is a need, working with Lancashire Sport and the relevant NGBs to identify and target specific key clubs to support.

If this is to be achieved, WLDC must assess whether it can make more funding (and facility allocation-based resource) available to assist its own staff and partner agencies. Such support will be required to stimulate development of voluntary sector aspiration, capacity and propensity to engage with and support key Council agendas (e.g. community safety and work with targeted groups). Intervention or support priorities should be directly linked to assisting WLDC to deliver on other key Strategy priorities.

### **Coach and volunteer development**

Strategy consultation highlighted the lack of coaches and volunteers (particularly in key areas of the District). A clear priority is to develop and implement programmes to identify, recruit, train and deploy coaches and volunteers. The reluctance of people to volunteer is, in part, caused by a fear of the over-commitment of existing volunteers and this should be considered when action is taken.

An over-reliance on training-based support is unlikely to be productive without concomitant emphasis on recruitment and processes to actually increase the benefits obtained by, and the status of, volunteers. Initial steps have been made via WLDC's Coach Education Scheme (which has produced 29 newly qualified coaches) and through the Council's involvement in the Millennium Volunteers initiative.

Key shortfalls and gaps in the availability and quality of coaches and volunteers should continue to be addressed by the development and implementation of programmes to identify, recruit, train and deploy coaches and volunteers. Practical and financial support to assist actual and prospective volunteers and existing coaches to attend coach education and personal development courses should be linked to their utilisation to deliver Strategic targets or SDU orchestrated activity.

### Discretionary rate relief

Although the Council presently offers reasonable rate relief for facility owning sports clubs, processes used to determine this are not administered by LCA. For most clubs the sums involved are not huge - but they are significant. Criteria used to determine DRR are not linked to LCA operation, priority sports or Strategic policy. A more structured approach to the use of DRR would put the Council in a position to positively encourage good practice, create and support healthy clubs and enhance the growth of sport and recreational opportunity.

Consideration should be given to WLDC transferring responsibility for determining the criteria for DRR for sports clubs and for the process itself to LCA.

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### PLAY

A number of children orientated programmes and activities are delivered across the Authority. In addition to locally organised play and crèche opportunities; provided by local groups at church halls and parish facilities, WLDC supports targeted and general access schemes. These comprise, in the main:

- School holiday play-days for young people aged 5 to 8 years.
- District wide sports and arts based schemes with open access.
- Target group based work with young people.

The nature of these programmes means that they overlap with sports and arts development and associated facility concerns. The need to maximise value at these 'common interest' points areas is addressed below.

#### *Play days*

The school holiday play day programmes for 5 to 8 year olds provide all day cover. Activities include arts, craft, drama informal sports and a range of games within a structured environment. The scheme allows delivery across the whole Authority area at relatively low cost. And brings skilled, experienced and qualified staff into local communities. Programmes offered are generally interesting and varied and it utilises a range of community facilities.

It is, however, only available to children from a relatively narrow age band leaving a significant number of children outside its provision and the way in which it is 'rolled out' across the district means that continuity of provision, in any one location is limited. This makes it difficult for children and play workers to get to know each other and establish positive relationships and limits opportunity to build positive group dynamics. It also limits opportunity for parents/carers to become involved in delivery, limiting potential for local skill development, ownership and capacity building.

The lack of a clear rationale, and accompanying plan, for play provision means that not all the possible value is being drawn from the programme.

#### *District wide sports and arts based schemes*

WLDC delivers and manages a programme of school holiday activity programmes for young people delivered at Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale leisure centres and the Chapel Art Gallery in Ormskirk. This is aimed principally at young people aged 8-13 year, has open access and uses centre staff. Sport coaching is the basic delivery vehicle.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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It attracts young people into sports and arts facilities via delivery of supported, non-threatening opportunity to participate and addresses the needs of an important age group during holiday periods. It also provides diversionary activities for young people that may otherwise be vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal or unsafe activities. It has led to the opening of facilities at what are otherwise off-peak periods and is a potential platform for links to other sports or arts development work.

However, activities are often run on a stand-alone basis with no structured or progressive tie-ins to other programmes. In addition, although it offers subsidised access, it is widely considered to attract those most able to afford the entry fees and is, due to the location and nature of delivery, thought to attract attendance from young people with interested, active and mobile parents.

It is also fair to say that strategic dialogue between delivery agents is limited and the quality, marketing and style of the days reflects current facility management regimes. Programmes are popular and generally well attended. However, as is noted above they have probably attracted, by virtue of their facility based nature and the way they are organised, a fairly narrow population catchment. Like some other aspects of service delivery for children and young people in the District they appear to operate independently of wider strategic or 'joined up' approaches.

### ***Target group work with young people.***

WLDC supports a range of diversionary activity programmes, children's and youth activity projects, which target young people within designated areas of deprivation or those who are deemed to have particular needs. These include the Recreation Activity Programme (RAP) summer programme for targeted young people and year round activities for children aged 10-13, principally in Skelmersdale.

This is successful with young people with whom it is normally difficult to engage. RAP was developed in conjunction with the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership and is a good example of collaboration between key statutory sector partners work and the voluntary sector. Additional resource has recently been acquired through the Children's Fund to expand this work. An important element is provision of resources for activities targeted at young people in Skelmersdale.

The tie up with informal recreational and play space is important also because, in general terms these areas have not been linked into structured or strategic programming. The concept of 'off site' working, and the practical lessons learnt through it, should inform a wider review of services.

Other funding has been sourced from the Children's Fund for programmes in Burscough and Skelmersdale. Holiday play schemes also run at rural playgrounds, servicing young people who are 'not easily be able to access services'.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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WLDC supports the work of West Lancashire Disability Sports Forum (WLDSF) which runs a 'sportsability' club in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. It is seeking funding to operate year round and to form a regular after school club. A weekly specialist scheme is also organised in Skelmersdale and similar summer holiday schemes for disabled children run at Edge Hill College and Moss Lea Day Centre.

Sport Action Skelmersdale (SAS) operates year round in Skelmersdale and targets young people who would normally not join sports clubs. Funded jointly by SRB 5 and WLDC, it is managed by WLDC's SDU. Work in Skelmersdale is also delivered in partnership with Glenburn School's youth and community programme.

Lancashire Youth and Community Service funds year round services at a number of community facilities. It provides three day a week youth club provision at three rural, locally access venues where access to services in general is deemed to be more difficult. Its community centre based work includes art and music activities at in Ormskirk and a year round programme, with additional school holiday provision at the Grove Youth Centre in Burscough.

Interagency partnerships in West Lancashire are cordial and have potential for extension. Programme development tends, in most cases, to follow the course set by the funding opportunities that underpin it and is, thus, fairly reactive.

The District should draw up a clear policy statement on levels and target for play and informal recreational services for young people. This should, in demonstrate recognition that the provision of services for children should, particularly in the context of a cultural strategy, reflect the fact that:

- Play is an essential aspect of children's culture and quality of life.
- Children's play is an initiation into a wider cultural life
- Play and culture share the characteristic of being intrinsically worthwhile.

A review of all three main elements of play provision should be implemented. This should include consideration of why, where, when, how often, for whom and by whom programmes are delivered. It should include an evaluation of whether and how play can/should make a more specific contribution to the achievement of key organisational goals and be better dovetailed into the operation of clubs or activities that offer young people a more sustainable engagement option.

Although the long-term security of various funding streams is, by definition, uncertain, the strategic context of play work needs to be considered within a wider understanding of provision for children and young people. This the planning and delivery of future work and ensure that it does not take place in isolation from other comparable play (and more 'mainstream' arts and sports) provision.

This review should be pre-empted, by a scoping review that clarifies WLDC expectations of, and desired outcomes from, the programme.

### *Play areas*

Fixed play areas are distributed across West Lancashire. These vary considerably in size, quality and condition. Many, particularly in Skelmersdale, are relatively small. In Skelmersdale and Ormskirk, WLDC provides and maintains all sites. In other settlements, such as Burscough, both parish councils and WLDC provide and maintain sites. Outside these areas, playgrounds tend to be the responsibility of parish councils.

In general they are of reasonable quality and, in recent years, some improvement work has been undertaken. Site development and maintenance is, however, largely reactive and significant resource is expended upon repair, particularly after repeated vandalism. The result is community perceptions that play sites are given a low priority.

WLDC needs to rationalise its fixed play provision based upon a move away from maintaining small play sites in favour of improving larger facilities with better equipment and ancillary provision. This should be linked to improvements to site access and visibility.

Local involvement in site management should be supported. Community groups should be encouraged to work positively with youth work agencies, schools, WLDC, police, EYCP etc to take an active role in the maintenance and operation of sites. This should be linked to work with parish councils to identify a District wide programme of community 'ownership' and management.

Consideration should also be given to investment in play/recreation sites that present a wider array of options for young people of all ages, for example; skateboard/roller-blade/BMX, youth shelters and multi-use activity areas.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The West Lancashire plain during Roman times was thinly-peopled marshland waste, behind the coastal sand dunes. It began to be settled by the Vikings working their way down the west of Scotland, the Solway Firth and the Cumbrian coast, leaving their legacy in West Lancashire's placenames and gene pool. It was a fen culture based on fishing, eeling and harvesting flax hemp and willow to produce linen, rope, and baskets. Martin Mere was the largest lowland lake in England, Burscough Priory an important religious centre in the marshlands.

Drainage for agriculture gathered pace over the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Ormskirk grew up as a market centre on the Liverpool to Preston road. The unenclosed peat mosses were brought into cultivation, improved with lime into one of the most productive arable farming areas in the country.

The Leeds-Liverpool Canal opened the District up for trade, Hesketh Bank became a significant small port, but there was little of the industrial development of East and South Lancashire. Those industrial towns to the east and south provided ready markets for intensive market gardening, and for the resorts that grew up with the railways along the coast.

The result is a wide open, flat landscape, with small autonomous communities still characteristic of agricultural ways of life. The District is a major supplier of vegetables to major supermarket chains. It is also commuter country, which means that the nature of its communities has changed. A final major change has been Skelmersdale New Town - built around a small mining community in the south of the district which has brought a completely different dimension.

The context is, thus, West Lancashire's 'undramatic' landscape. This has been transformed over 300 years by human intervention. Settlements in the District are small and relatively modest, and while it retains some of its great houses, its civic, public and ecclesiastical buildings are equally inconspicuous. The new town is also relatively low-key.

With only limited extractive industry, wealth has been derived from agriculture, and it has little of the industrial heritage of its neighbours. It might be described as an area that has been crossed by trade without developing much of an infrastructure for it. The result is a district that does have quite a distinctive heritage, which is perhaps little noticed and relatively under-exploited.

The district has more than 600 listed buildings, 28 conservation areas and 12 scheduled ancient monuments. These include the half-timbered Rufford Old Hall, dating back to 1420, now a well-visited National Trust property, and the 150 room Pugin-designed Scarisbrook Hall, built from the profits of draining the peatlands, and not generally accessible to visitors.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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With the canal communities, and Ormskirk, which has retained much of its character as a market town in spite of some mediocre retail developments, it has quite a lot to make something of. Given the fact that it is bordered on its western side by a series of resorts, and to its south and east is in easy reach of a catchment area of several million people, there is a strong argument for finding the right way to highlight its heritage.

The three strategic priorities for the District should be to:

- Use the heritage of the area of the area as part of improving and sustaining the quality of life for its residents, be they rooted natives of the area or socially mobile commuters who will be moving on in a few years, residents of agricultural villages or of Skelmersdale estates.
- Extend, improve and market its offer to visitors.
- Ensure that the 21<sup>st</sup> century contribution to its heritage is positive, so that it is valued by future residents and visitors.

### West Lancashire Heritage Centre

West Lancashire is the only district in Lancashire without a museum. The proposal to develop the Magistrates' Court in Ormskirk as a Heritage Centre would, on this basis, seem to be a priority. It is located close to the Town Centre, and the proposed scheme seems to be the 'right size' for the town and would appear to make appropriate use of a significant building in the town. The partnership between West Lancashire Heritage Association, the County Council Museums Service and WLDC gives it some strength.

The key issues are:

- To resource it sufficiently for it to be able to generate local use through education and community group links.
- To balance local use and promotion of the value of local heritage with a building that has sufficient profile for it to make a significant contribution to the District's offer to visitors.
- To develop a three-way partnership, enabling the voluntary sector to play a strong part.
- To market it effectively and coherently in tandem with other District facilities.

The Council should actively pursue the proposal for the West Lancashire heritage Centre in Ormskirk Magistrates' Court

### The contemporary built environment

The built environment of the district appears, with the exception of some of its most significant heritage buildings, to be unexceptional. Ormskirk is not characterised by buildings that are trying to compete with its neighbours, for example, and as a new town, Skelmersdale is functional, without landmark buildings, and asking quietly to be finished.

Quality design is an issue for all communities, not simply those aspiring to be European Capital of Culture. Quality of design matters anywhere, and is not the same as expensive design. Neither is it an issue simply for public buildings; the principles apply from domestic level right through to major commercial buildings.

The design of individual buildings runs alongside the sustaining of good streetscape and local built environments. Central Skelmersdale would arguably benefit from good new buildings, but these would need to relate properly to each other, and to what is already there, to help to create a real sense of place.

Significant new buildings will go on appearing in the District. There is a strong argument for encouraging extra consideration of design by their builders and developers. Equally, self-builders and existing homeowners could be encouraged to focus on design, especially since television programmes like Grand Designs have gone a little way towards raising awareness about design and construction.

- Through the Cultural Partnership, and with a range of other stakeholders and partners, including the architects based in the district, WLDC should seek to raise awareness of, and interest in, the design of buildings, and the built environment generally.

### ARTS PROVISION AND OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity for participation in arts activity in West Lancashire is, for a district of its demographic mix, generally considered to have been limited in its range, partly due to scarcity of resources, often with a low profile, but marked by some high-quality initiatives. A number of organisations within the community are actively engaged in a range of arts and heritage activities. There has, however, been little evaluation of such initiatives. The District has, over the last five years or so, developed particularly strong programmes in visual arts, including public and environmental art projects, with determined and creative leadership from WLDC.

Initial work (in 2000) for the Corporate Cultural Strategy (CCS) highlighted a need for the co-ordination of a more strategic approach to cultural development within the District - possibly via the establishment of some kind of forum. Partnership work at that point appears to have been relatively limited. However, since then, there have been important and successful partnerships. Collaborative projects include:

- The 'Elements' public art project, funded by a grant from SRB. This is designed to improve the image of several industrial estates in Skelmersdale, and the major roads leading up to them, by creating distinctive pieces of artwork upon them. The ultimate aim is to support work being done to encourage investment and increase the number of job opportunities in the area.
- The Canal Corridor Sculpture Trail, which involves WLDC arts and countryside officers, British Waterways and canalside communities in providing major public artworks celebrating local heritage. Two are in place already, a third is in progress and more are planned.
- Skelmersdale Music Workshop: This offers instrumental tuition, runs an instrument loan scheme and organises workshops in the writing of music and lyrics, and is resourced by the Youth and Community Service of Lancashire County Council

Limited information is available with regard to the level of arts activity in schools. However, this is recognised to be a substantial area of activity.

The colleges of further education in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk offer a diverse range of college courses in Art, Design, Drama and Music. Edge Hill College of Higher Education in Ormskirk also offers a wide range of educational programmes covering areas such as Communications and Media, Performing Arts and Creative Writing. Recent developments at Edge Hill include a new Learning Innovation Centre that provides the latest information technology facilities, radio and TV studios, editing suites and media production booths.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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The Youth and Community Service of Lancashire County Council uses art and cultural activities as a tool for the personal development of young people. The Service has recently developed a recording and video studio at Cross Hall High School, promotes an outdoor music festival in Skelmersdale (SKEMFEST) and has established the Skelmersdale Music Workshop. These initiatives are a first for West Lancashire, giving young people the opportunity to develop a career in the professional music industry.

The West Lancashire Youth Dance initiative is well established and is supported by Lancashire County Council and the Rose Theatre at Edge Hill College. To ensure cultural provision for the districts older residents, there is a close working relationship between the District Council and Age Concern.

Cultural initiatives are also used frequently in health promotional activity. For example, arts activities are being used as therapy for rehabilitation and to educate young people in issues relating to sexual health, alcohol and drug abuse. With the introduction of healthy living centres (funded through NOF), which promote health in its widest context, targeted at areas of deprivation, it is likely that cultural activities will have an increasingly significant role in the District.

Key issues raised in the CCS included the following:

- The need for a more corporate approach; identifying ways in which culture contributes to core District Council work.
- Greater WLDC consideration of the cultural implications of corporate policy decisions and the grasping of opportunities for cultural development.
- The need to learn lessons from good practice elsewhere and the benefits derived from working more closely with neighbouring local authorities.
- The desirability of local activities being linked to regional initiatives and partnerships where appropriate.
- The need for a 'Cultural Partnership' to improve communication and make best use of resources. Its work should link to, for example; Community Safety and planned Health strategies. Membership to include, for example:
  - Agencies delivering cultural activity/development in the District
  - Schools and colleges (linked to audits of existing cultural activity).
  - The Youth and Community Service.
- The limited studio, rehearsal and exhibition space for local artists.
- The location, purposes, usage and equipment of venues for performing arts (including outdoor venues) and the need for a review as a basis for their improvement.
- The need for improved information and communication, particularly about/between cultural activities within the voluntary sector and cultural sector employment and the potential value of a database of local artists.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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- The potential for creative public art to improve the local environment and image, and the image of West Lancashire as a creative and cultural place and the desirability of WLDC and other agencies promoting this.
- The need to secure the employment and economic potential of creative industries built, for example, upon the recognition that there are few specialised retail opportunities for the arts and crafts within the District.
- The need for West Lancashire as a whole to capitalise upon its cultural tourism potential by promoting and enhancing its current assets and through the development of a tourism strategy.

### **The built infrastructure for the arts**

A number of arts facilities are located within the District (as well as village and community halls). These include:

- The Rose Theatre, Edge Hill College, Ormskirk.
- The Civic Hall, Ormskirk.
- The Phoenix Theatre, Skelmersdale College.
- The Chapel Gallery, Ormskirk
- Cross Hall Art Theatre, Ormskirk.
- Skelmersdale Amphitheatre, Town Centre.

### *Skelmersdale Town Centre*

As the largest town in the District, Skelmersdale is notably limited in cultural, leisure and entertainment opportunities. This is particularly apparent in the town centre, where there is little obvious to attract anyone to use it outside shopping hours. As a substantial urban community, it seems to have nothing with any profile around which to build an evening economy. It is surprising that a town of its size does have such limited facilities. If it is to establish its identity as a significant sub-regional town, there is a very strong argument for it strengthening its broadly cultural 'offer'.

Clearly the most obvious manifestation of this would be in stimulating use of the town centre in the evenings - making the space lively, active and safe through generating a range of social and cultural opportunities. The more diverse this is, and the more flows of people there are to and from different destinations in the town centre, the better, in terms of the comfort and visitor-friendliness of the town. In other words, the answer is not to introduce one or two major club/bar facilities, and assume that this generates an active and accessible town centre. This in itself establishes and embeds an urban identity which is unlikely to be attractive to the majority of residents of the town.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Evening use of the town centre is only part of the picture. Broadening its daytime offer could be equally significant in establishing it as a strong core to the town.

Neither the Nye Bevan Pool nor Skelmersdale Sports Centre appear to be viable venues for substantial programmes of non-sports activity in their present form.

There appears to be limited commercial entertainment provision in the town centre and no major cinema in the town.

Skelmersdale College operates the 160-seat Phoenix Theatre with some success within its main campus a little outside the town centre. Its prime function is as a facility for its own performing arts courses, which tend to be focused on BTEC. The College has around 60 students in its performing arts courses, most of whom go on to higher education. The theatre also programmes some incoming professional theatre and dance, including Northern Ballet and Horse and Bamboo.

It has recently introduced cinema, following the provision of screen and digital projection equipment by a supporter. This aimed to attract children in particular, but its programming is being expanded. This programme is not currently financially supported by WLDC. Though the venue's relationship with the Authority is positive, there is still potential for redeveloping the practical partnership which there has been in the past.

The County Council library is a good facility and is well-used in the context of its catchment and location.

The County Council also operated the small arts centre below the library until its recent closure at the end of the financial year. At one point it was staffed by a full-time arts officer employed by the County Council, but the post was disestablished some years ago. Since that time it had been operated by the head librarian directly, with some success in terms of audiences for touring performance, and for exhibitions.

However, as a single open-plan space it always had serious limitations, being unable to run parallel programming, or to accommodate live performance of any scale. Realistically it seems to have been a well-intentioned gesture rather than a resource that could have built up any real critical mass of programming and use, and its closure has not been marked by significant public objection. However, its little-opposed closure is not evidence against the development of a better cultural, leisure and entertainment offer in the town centre.

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Experience in other towns in the UK does suggest that investment in the right kind of town centre cultural venue makes a significant difference to the image of the town, the vitality of the urban core, the opportunities for residents, the evening economy and actual and perceived public safety. The right kind of cultural venue in Skelmersdale Town Centre could make a major impact on its contribution to the district.

The key, of course, would be delivering the right sort of model. There is little argument for a traditional single-auditorium civic theatre, because the contemporary market is diverse, selective and fragmented. Equally, there is no argument for a large-scale showpiece auditorium, since the market is almost certainly not there for it in the town, and there is competition in all directions.

A key area of consideration would be film. The strong resurgence of cinema-going which began in the 1980s has resulted in commercial investment in multiplexes and the re-shaping of traditional cinemas across the UK. It would be fair to say that the tide is rising less quickly now, and that the commercial sector is less likely to be looking to invest in new multiplexes in medium-sized towns like Skelmersdale. However, if the town centre were to be developed in a way which made it more attractive as a leisure destination, there might be potential in the future for some commercial investment.

What the Skelmersdale context does seem to offer now is considerable potential for a right-sized venue with a range of flexible facilities to enable a wide spectrum of use. The underpinning of such a venue would not be the promotion of programmes brought in from outside, though this could be part of the offer. The prime object of the exercise would be to generate a strong programme of practical participation, bringing people through the building for a wide spectrum of activity, much of it quite small-scale, and throughout the day and evening.

Partnership may be the best (or only) way to achieve such a project, given the significant capital cost. The starting point may be replacement of the present pool. The College is clearly a potential partner, having an active performing arts department. There might be elements in which the County Council was interested, and there might be private sector potential through, for example, bar/club provision. Partnership is particularly important in terms of capital funding, given the reduction in Lottery resources for arts buildings in particular.

The principle would be to develop a high-quality building with the widest possible range of uses, run in a coherent way, with a strong independent image and the flexibility to adapt and develop its programming continuously. A mixed-use venue contains elements of compromise which need to spread to accommodate the widest possible range of viable uses. The scaling of the building needs to be based on realistic regular levels of use rather than the potential of occasional commercial sell-outs.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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A priority is clearly involvement for young people. This means having the scope to offer a changing range of new opportunities, often short-term, to run alongside more established, regular and sustained programmes. This implies a flexible building with some loose-fit capacity, rather than a set of highly specialist facilities from which alternative uses are excluded.

The components of a venue might include a 400-500 capacity main auditorium, with flexibility, dance and other performance studio spaces, capacity to show film on a regular basis, music practice and performance spaces and bar provision. It might also include some managed workspace and incubator space for creative industries initiatives.

It is unrealistic to imagine that a cultural venue for public use will fully pay for its own staffing, operating costs and depreciation. However, by linking a range of complementary facilities under a single coherent operating structure, and programming them densely and in parallel, the facilities will earn more of their keep for the same investment in running costs and staffing. In other words, the financial principle behind such a scheme would be to generate better long-term value for the investment, wherever that comes from.

In terms of how best to operate such a venue, the same considerations apply as for Ormskirk Civic Hall.

The Council should explore the potential of a new venue in Skelmersdale Town Centre with a range of potential partners, including voluntary sector organisations. If appropriate, with partners, it should commission a feasibility study.

The Council should explore the broad contribution that cultural facilities and opportunities of all kinds, including, for example, managed workspaces, could make to Skelmersdale Town Centre.

### *Facilities in Ormskirk*

Ormskirk has, because it is an old market town that has grown and changed incrementally over many years, a much broader offer than Skelmersdale. However, it is probably not the chosen evening leisure, social and cultural destination of many residents for much of the time. There may be potential for improvements to be made.

One of the significant weaknesses in Ormskirk's offer, to its own residents, as a market town for a wider hinterland, and as a visitor destination, is the limited opportunity there is for enjoying or participating in live arts and entertainment except at the 'pub' level.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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Part of the answer lies in finding ways of stimulating promotion of, for example, different kinds of live music, or comedy, which depend on entrepreneurial enthusiasts, whether in the conventional non-professional mould, or with commercial aspirations. Much of the rest of the answer lies in the town's built infrastructure.

### Chapel Gallery

A powerful example of what can be achieved with commitment, imagination, professional skill and some resources, is the Chapel Gallery. It is a good quality small facility, which has clearly made an impact, well beyond Ormskirk, as well as locally. It is programmed interestingly, uses artists' residencies effectively, and publicises and markets itself clearly, widely and at the right level. It runs workshop programmes and projects, often in partnership with other organisations. It has a good track record in education work.

A further contribution that it makes is to the cultural economy, through its support of emerging professional artists, showcasing their work, and through its small but high quality retail operation.

Although it is tucked away behind the community centre, it nonetheless makes a positive contribution to its bit of Ormskirk's streetscape, and to the Town's overall offer. It is an example of a right-sized first step in building a cultural infrastructure for the Town.

Its limits are to do with available activity space, but given its physical link with the community centre, there is obvious potential for developing opportunities for further gallery, workshop and participatory programmes, and other creative uses, in the main body of the centre alongside its mainstream community programme.

The Chapel Gallery is the sort of facility that Ormskirk should have as a matter of course. It also highlights the axiom that money is not the only determining issue, having been achieved for very modest capital investment. It does not follow from this, of course, that developments of this quality can always be achieved so inexpensively.

### Rose Theatre

The prime provider of incoming performing arts programme, and home to some locally generated activity, is the Rose Theatre within Edge Hill College. This has been running a mixed programme of touring for a number of years. Recent developments have included the creation of a foyer, which has considerably improved the customer experience.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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One of the key areas of development in its programme has been the introduction of stand-up comedy, for which it has steadily built an audience. Conversely, as the College's music courses have downsized, its music programming has reduced.

The venue is run in close co-operation with the College's Performing Arts Department, but is independently and professionally programmed and promoted. The College is the biggest investor in it, on the basis that it is valuable to its relationship with the Town and surrounding communities, and is a useful attraction for its potential students.

North West Arts funding has increased from £2,000 per year to £8,000 and it has been accepted as a three-year-funded client. This is likely to be maintained under the reorganised ACE structure, and enables diverse and challenging programming. The Theatre also receives £4,000 from Lancashire County Council.

It is not currently directly funded by WLDC, but has been for its dance workshop programmes with Ludus Dance, the regional dance company. It has also received support in kind, and enjoys a positive partnership relationship with Council officers.

As a small venue on a Higher Education campus, it seems to be working well, drawing good audiences to interesting programmes, and attracting a combination of campus and external customers, to a mix that varies across different sectors of the programme. It is doing a notably good job, and there seems to every argument for it to continue as it is for as long as the College context remains as positive as it clearly is. There is not a particularly strong argument, conversely, for an Ormskirk venue, a redeveloped Civic Hall, for instance, to seek to compete with it in areas of programme where it is working well.

It is an important part of Ormskirk's offer, which would both benefit from, and contribute strongly to, a push to improve the town's infrastructure in a coherent and well-marketed way.

### A right-sized venue for Ormskirk

The clear and obvious weakness in Ormskirk itself is the absence of a strong focus for performing arts and entertainment, of a right-sized popular venue which can be programmed in ways which will both increase opportunity and raise aspirations. This is clear both from what residents say about Ormskirk itself, and from the specific responses amongst local arts organisations.

A town of Ormskirk's size might be expected to be better provided in this field, and it is clear that its overall offer to residents could be significantly better if the right-sized venue were developed.

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What might this mean? Broadly speaking, a flexible facility with a range of facilities which can be used for:

- ❑ Public performance of professional and non-professional music, dance, drama and entertainment.
- ❑ Workshops in all areas of performing arts.
- ❑ Meeting and rehearsal/project development space for new and existing local organisations.
- ❑ Studio spaces for people to participate in dance and related areas.
- ❑ Space for music rehearsal and some recording.
- ❑ Access projects of all kinds.
- ❑ Temporary exhibition space which could be linked to the Chapel Gallery.
- ❑ Some capacity for showing film.
- ❑ Social and community activity.
- ❑ Casual drop-in, meeting, networking and idea swapping.

The answer could lie in Ormskirk Civic Hall. While some of its current users are not completely happy with it as a facility, it has a number of strengths, not least that it is owned by the Authority. It is apparently reasonably sound as a building, in quite a good position, if slightly off-town centre. It has worn well since the last time money was invested in it, and seems to be managed simply and effectively.

In terms of its spaces and facilities, it is a good starting point. Its main auditorium is probably quite close to the right size, and the fact that it is a flat floor space without fixed raked seating means that it is inherently quite flexible. Investment in good-quality bleacher seating could improve its sightlines and atmosphere significantly without excessively reducing capacity, and a redesign of the existing stage could produce worthwhile improvements.

Its key present limitations are to do with the fact that once it ceased to be used as a drill hall, many of its smaller spaces stopped having any useful function. Its only significant public spaces are the main hall and the upstairs function room. In its present backstage area, there are a number of spaces that could be developed into useful activity rooms and studio spaces, and indeed could offer creative industries incubation space.

Other key limitations are to do with access. As far as access for people with mobility difficulties are concerned, the building is at present highly unsatisfactory, and the Disability Discrimination Act will compel action to be taken on some aspects. Front door access is not possible for wheelchair users, nor is stage access, or access to dressing rooms, any other backstage space or the upstairs function room at the front of the building. Neither does it have access to significant off-street parking. A final important weakness is that its frontage is not attention-grabbing, nor particularly inviting.

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However, there is the potential for an imaginative redevelopment scheme which would not necessarily be expensive. The aims would be:

- ❑ To open up access to the building.
- ❑ To give it a stronger entrance and better visibility.
- ❑ To create the range of flexible spaces to enabled a range of activity throughout the daytime and evening, seven days a week, and with as much parallel programming as possible.
- ❑ To improve the quality of the main auditorium.
- ❑ To provide a convincing bar and social space for everyday use.
- ❑ To bring the existing spaces up to a reasonable level of contemporary decorative finish.

The steps to achieving this may be to:

- ❑ Retain the core fabric as it stands.
- ❑ Replace the one-storey buildings added to the side facing the church with a well-designed two-storey extension the length of the building.
- ❑ Incorporate within this new build a new, prominent and appropriately manageable main entrance.
- ❑ Include within the new build appropriate lifts enabling access to first floor spaces in the existing building, at front and rear.
- ❑ Incorporate meeting rooms and dance studios within the new build.
- ❑ Redevelop simply and economically the range of backstage spaces, to open them up for a range of possible uses, including an appropriate level of flexible dressing room spaces.

A bar might be located in the new build, looking over the churchyard, or in the present function room.

This would result in a building that would lend itself to a much broader range of possible uses, with improved facilities for performance, and the potential for several different activities to take place at the same time.

The success of such a building would not be simply a matter of the building and its facilities, however. It would need to be operated at the very least in close partnership with the voluntary sector, with commercial promoters at different levels, and potentially with Ormskirk College.

There are different models for operating this kind of facility. Direct operation by the authority would clearly leave plenty of potential for interesting programming, as long as the right skills in programme development, marketing and venue operation were built in to the team.

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It may be that a trust structure could be the appropriate model for its management, in that it allows the Authority to distance itself slightly from direct programming issues, and has some financial benefits. It also allows other potential stakeholders to become involved in the planning and delivery of programme, and opens up access to a range of external expertise.

A third option pursued for some municipal theatres is that of commercial management. It is hard to see this being a realistic proposition for the Civic Hall, and the interests of commercial leisure operators do not coincide entirely with the cross-cutting interests of most local authorities.

To explore more fully the potential for redeveloping the Civic Hall, the Council should open up dialogue with other potential stakeholders. It should prepare a brief for a feasibility study, and commission such a study.

### North Meols Leisure Centre

The Centre is an unusual venue, partly through its origins as part of the hospital, and clearly has a useful role to play for the north part of the District. It is in good physical and decorative condition, and has potential for some further development.

Its location on the outskirts of the rather straggling village itself should not be a particular problem, particularly, given the development taking place around it. Similarly, its location close to the north tip of Southport should, in the long term, bring as much advantage as disadvantage. If it is offering an interesting programme at the right price in good quality facilities, it is likely to attract users from a wide hinterland, including Southport, though access would primarily be by car.

A particular asset of the centre from a programme point of view is the way that it spreads across the site. Without being designed for the purpose, it lends itself to a range of different activities happening at the same time. In particular, the gym and the main hall are at opposite ends of the centre, and the issue of noise transfer is almost certainly non-existent. It is also, with the exception of the stage in the main hall, accessible for people with mobility difficulties throughout. Its fitness suite is low-key, but there would appear to be sufficient gym-users who prefer this kind of less overbearing facility.

At the moment, it is used for a range of low-key leisure activities which fulfil a useful purpose for its customers. The two most important nights of the week for social and entertainment uses, Friday and Saturday, are block-booked for country and western and line-dancing. On some occasions another event is programmed in, but this is rare, unwelcome to the block-bookers, and mainly limited to the Banks Brass Band concerts.

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This means, amongst other things, that it cannot play much of a role as a social focus for the local community, with weddings, parties and fundraisers being largely ruled out. It has a useful bar, but only limited occasions when there is significant income to be generated from it. The result is a venue that appears to have got itself stuck.

There is some evidence that it does not have a particularly high profile in the village itself. Certainly, it is poorly signed from within the village, and is rather apologetic for itself on site. It looks like a school campus facility, but does not have the on-site throughput that a campus location brings.

As a set of facilities it does seem to offer real opportunities. What it lacks is a budget for pro-active programming, and a strong marketing impetus, backed up by a budget, to sell it effectively to communities in the north of the District.

Among the areas which could be explored to develop the centre are:

- Reduction of the current block-booking near-monopoly, on a pilot basis, offering the facility for other uses to test the market. This might result in short-term loss of income, but would probably be of long-term benefit.
- To market the venue to potential promoters of different kinds of music.
- To develop, probably through independent trainers, instructors and teachers, pilot programmes of activity across the yoga-aerobics-Pilates-dance spectrum, and probably on a shared-risk basis in the first instance.
- To develop after-school activities and holiday programmes for local young people .
- To test the potential for one-off and extended whole-venue festivals and events, such as a West Lancashire day of dance, or youth theatre, or a summer music project, or a Banks documentary film project.
- To seek to seed a range of self-programming local groups, in sport, leisure or performing and visual arts and crafts.
- To develop simple facilities for showing a range of exhibitions, from local and district history through schools work to 2D visual arts and photography.

All these need to be done by working wherever possible with local residents, and the groups that already exist in the area.

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In the context of its built facilities, WLDC should:

- Continue to develop and extend the work of the Chapel Gallery, including exploring the opportunities of more integrated programming and use of the community centre.
- Work in a closer partnership with the Rose Theatre, particularly in support of participatory projects in the performing arts sector
- Undertake a preliminary consultation to explore the potential interest in a redevelopment of Ormskirk Civic Hall as a flexible performing arts and entertainment venue and, in the event of positive responses, commission a feasibility study to test the potential of such a scheme.
- Develop with local stakeholders and potential users from outside a strategy for broadening the programme and user-base at North Meols Leisure Centre

### Public and environmental art

A key area of arts development in West Lancashire is public and environmental art. The District has a growing body of experience in this, as the successful 'Elements' programme of roundabout works in Skelmersdale shows. They are striking landmark pieces, and should be a stimulus for different kinds of work across the district. Other recent public art initiatives have included the Canal Corridor Sculpture Trail on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and work in Mere Sands Woods.

The two main town centres of the District, in their different ways however, lack a strong sense of identity and distinctiveness.

Ormskirk has had attention paid to its streetscape, and the creation of at least one shopping alley off the main street picks up a little bit of character. However, though it is tidy and has recent street furniture, the result is more dull and bland than it needed to be. This is compounded by the way the road layout creates an island of the town centre, with many of the town's interesting buildings cut off from it.

More imaginative surfacing, more attention to all street furniture and a long-term programme to commission permanent public art of different kinds would, over a period, begin to restore some of the distinctive quality that any market town of Ormskirk's size should have. Equally important, as the CCS highlights, this is not simply a matter of permanent works.

The town centre has strong potential for temporary artworks, such as banners, works with light and projection and installations, which could be linked to different kinds of creative project.

Skelmersdale town centre could be a secondary shopping centre in any out-of-city-centre housing development across the UK. This is obviously mainly to do with the style and quality of its buildings, the nature of its shops, the lack of any real landmark public building and its featureless open spaces.

As with Ormskirk, an incremental long-term programme of commissioning permanent public art could make a substantial impact within a few years. As has been shown by recent projects, it also lends itself to temporary works, the shopping centre itself offering particular opportunities.

One key to making a significant impact on the streetscape of each town centre will be the contribution of new developments. As well as encouraging quality design, the Council should seek to encourage developers to integrate quality public art within their schemes.

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This is not a matter of adding bits of sculpture to building projects, as the price for permitting development, but working with architects, developers, artists and the community to achieve results that do not necessarily incur major additional costs. This can apply to small as well as large developments, will normally be beneficial to the users of the buildings and can stimulate a better sense of civic responsibility for the way the streetscape looks.

This should be pursued in other parts of the district at appropriate levels. Should, for example, the Wharfside workshops development at Burscough become a reality, that presents obvious potential for commissioning and project-based public art work. Potential stakeholders outside the two towns include the third tier authorities as well as landowners and developers.

There are plenty of examples across the country of the contribution that public and environmental art can make to both the built and rural environments, and research visits would pay dividends. Lancashire County Council is a partner in public art in West Lancashire, as it is across the County. It has a strong track record in the field, so there is exemplary work within easy striking distance.

Opportunities to secure, support and fund public and environmental art should be pursued in other parts of the District at appropriate levels.

The CCS (2000) outlines an approach to public art, all elements of which should be implemented as proposed there. In particular, as a starting point, it states that a public art strategy or statement of intent should be prepared. This should be implemented, drawing on advice and support from ACE. In particular, the Authority should recognise the potential of public art in all its forms; from commissioned street furniture through commissioned sculpture to temporary installation work based on participatory projects.

It should pursue the four key public and environmental arts proposals within the CCS (2000). These are the:

- ❑ Adoption of a Public Art Strategy or a Statement of Intent
- ❑ Extension of the public art programme to include creative approaches to streetscape improvement
- ❑ Exploration of partnership-based village improvement projects
- ❑ Introduction of temporary public art into Ormskirk town centre, and other appropriate contexts.

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### Creative industries

The creative industries are defined by the DCMS as 'those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the opportunity for wealth and job creation through the generation of intellectual property.' The creative industries sector includes a wide range of activities and links into many other employment sectors. It includes, broadly, employment in:

- Arts & crafts
- Media & entertainment
- Design & architecture
- Print
- Fashion

(The full range of occupational areas it is taken to include is listed as Appendix 2).

In the UK it is one of the most rapidly growing parts of the economy. Nationally, according to the DCMS in its mapping document of 2000, the revenue generated through the cultural industries amounts to £112.5 billion per year. It earns £10.3 billion in overseas earnings, and employs 1.3 million people.

At the same time, the historic underpinnings of the UK economy have shrunk in importance. Manufacturing industry remains under pressure, with a continuing trend for sourcing goods overseas. Agriculture's 1.5% share of the workforce is dwarfed by the 7% in tourism, the £64bn revenue generated by tourism is more than 4 times that of agriculture, and farming has experienced a 21% decline in revenue generated between 1996 and 1999, while tourism has seen a 26% revenue growth<sup>2</sup>.

However, the creative industries sector is clearly not the key to the economic future of West Lancashire, though it could be a valuable contributor and agent for diversity. This is because of the way cultural industries employment is distributed across the UK. The Arts Skills 2000 research, undertaken by Metier (formerly the National Training Organisation for the arts and entertainment sector) shows that 23% of the workers in the sector are based in London. A further 13% are in the South East. In contrast, the North West as a whole has 8%.

Clearly the heaviest concentrations in the North West are Manchester and Merseyside. Each is a significant national focus for the recording, broadcasting, media, design, arts and entertainment industries, and has a substantial investment in cultural tourism. This is exemplified in Liverpool's success in securing European City of Culture status in 2008.

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<sup>2</sup> English Tourist Board, 2001

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Given West Lancashire's location, within Liverpool's direct hinterland, and with ready access to Manchester, there are strong connections which may represent more opportunities than have yet been explored in the District.

A key part of the context for West Lancashire is the development of the regional strategy for creative industries<sup>3</sup>, led by the NWDA, which sets considerable store by developing the sector. The North West Regional Assembly has also identified creative industries as a major priority. It is worth noting that employment in the sector in the regionwest is c.3.5% of the total workforce, a higher proportion than any region outside London and the South-East.

The Regional Creative Industries strategy places a lot of emphasis on the 'clusters' concept. There are no creative industries activities in West Lancashire which could be said to constitute a 'cluster'. Most of it relates to the concentrations of activity going on in neighbouring areas, and probably Merseyside in particular. For most businesses in the sector in the district the fact of being in West Lancashire or not is of very little significance. Links beyond its boundaries are as important as those within it. However, as a means of encouraging new enterprise, developing a district support network and a range of learning opportunities would clearly be valuable.

West Lancashire already has a small but significant body of employment in the sector. The Creative Industry study undertaken in 2002<sup>4</sup> identifies 183 enterprises, including individual operators, within the sector in the district, and indicates that there are 392 people employed in creative businesses, and 237 people employed in creative occupations within businesses not defined as creative. This represents a modest body of employment, and at 1.6% of the workforce is only a third of the average level of employment in the sector for Lancashire as a whole. The biggest concentrations are in architecture and software development.

Because they tend to be small, and perceived as unusual, creative industries enterprises tend to gain limited value from business support structures. This is changing steadily, and there are various sources of advice and support available to businesses in the district.

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<sup>3</sup> England's Northwest Creative Industries Strategy: The Northwest Development Agency May 2002 - Developed by - BOP Positive Solutions and Theresa Griffin

<sup>4</sup> West Lancashire Creative Industries Study - The Edge Consultancy - March 2002

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The most important aspect of employment in the sector is the scale of its enterprises. The creative industries nationally are overwhelmingly made up of small firms, micro-businesses and individual practitioners. The result is that they can grow suddenly, and contract as quickly. They can be highly opportunist, and based in marginal premises. There is a lot of home-based work. For every high-earning PC games software maker there are dozens of craftspeople or clothesmakers operating at a very low turnover.

This is clearly the case in West Lancashire. Nearly half of the respondents to the West Lancashire Creative Industries study were turning over less than £10,000 a year. Part of this is to do with people working at the level at which they feel comfortable, part is to do with lifestyle choices. It is also characteristic of the sector that people do portfolio models, mixing part-time teaching, freelancing or other employment with their business. In the case of West Lancashire, there will be ample opportunity to put together such portfolios in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the surrounding districts.

The particular strengths of the District in creative industries are to do with its working environment. It is accessible from major urban centres, offers a range of small communities, and appears to offer a range of buildings and locations for new enterprises.

The implications for West Lancashire are that:

- Growth of employment in the sector will not come via establishment of companies that grow large quickly. There is potential for creative companies to relocate from urban areas. This would be a consequence of low rental for industrial space, good access and a 'different' working environment.
- Most growth is likely to come from encouragement of more micro-businesses, some of which will have significant growth potential. There is almost certainly scope to encourage new initiatives in employment from individuals and groups, in areas from design and digital multi-media through to photography, craft and visual arts: A prime tool for this is the making available of workshop, incubator and studio space.
- The Wharfshed proposal in Burscough has great potential. The likelihood, given experience of rural and small-community settings elsewhere in the country, and its location, is that it would fill to capacity immediately. A key to operating it would be to retain some short-term let studios to encourage new businesses. To develop the wharf as a live workplace would have a more positive impact on the texture of the town centre than adding more canal-side flats to its existing stock of commuter dormitories.

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- It is highly likely that the Wharfshed development would stimulate further demand, and the potential for further studio/managed workspace developments should be encouraged. There are plenty of models for this, not all of which are large-scale. Encouraging the offer of studio spaces within schools' or Colleges' premises, or developing spaces linked to the Chapel Gallery, or the Heritage Centre project or within a redeveloped Ormskirk Civic Hall would be other opportunities.
- The development of sustained creative employment initiatives within the regeneration of Skelmersdale would also seem to be a priority, building on the music and related initiatives which have already happened, and on the work of Skelmersdale Community Enterprise Agency.
- The introduction of some form of managed workspace/creative business centre should be considered as part of the diversification and development of Skelmersdale Town Centre
- The re-use of obsolete farm and industrial buildings for creative enterprises should also be permitted and where possible encouraged. There are numerous examples of farm-based creative industries studio and workspace projects, some of which have tourism and visitor benefits.
- There is a need for networking within the creative business sector at district level, across the whole spectrum, but this has to focus on practical benefits for the businesses and practitioners. A well-promoted time-efficient forum to explore common issues might identify appropriate courses of action for the sector, and should take account of existing specialist networks, the West Lancashire Crafts Guild and the newly-formed West Lancashire Artists' Forum.
- The sector should be represented effectively and consistently within the Cultural Partnership as the latter develops.

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The encouragement and development of creative industries is clearly a corporate function of the authority, and requires co-operative working across its functions, including planning, leisure, economic development and regeneration. This should be based on regular scheduled joint working groups and a proactive development agenda based on looking for opportunities across the District.

### The non-professional arts sector

A key part of cultural practice in any district is its non-professional sector, which might be expected to include a spread of mainstream sports and arts clubs, groups and associations. It can also range far beyond this into community organisations which operate in cultural fields from environmental improvement through to oral history, carnivals, festival and traditional crafts. It can encompass friends of museums, archaeology and heritage groups, aspiring professional performers and visual artists' groups.

The voluntary sector in the arts and heritage areas is sometimes characterised as marginal, traditional and entrenched. It tends to be taken less seriously than it should be, given the large numbers of people practically involved in it, and the obviously vastly larger numbers involved in it as audiences and visitors.

Evidence produced by the Voluntary Arts Network shows that, in rural areas, the levels of participation nationally in non-professional arts activity are significantly higher than in urban areas. This is partly the result of residents of smaller communities tending to be more proactive in involving themselves in community life, and partly that there is less competition from other providers.

It is widely recognised that the voluntary sector in all its forms is the most easily accessible opportunity for most people to participate in arts and creative activity other than on an individual basis.

It is worth noting that within the sample of 12 arts, heritage and community groups interviewed in West Lancashire, nine groups are straightforward amateur arts organisations, from a total of 24 regularly established groups within the sector in the District.

The interviewed sample had a total membership of just under 300. The remaining groups (that were not able to respond) include several larger ones than in the interviewed sample. It is probably fair to assume that the amateur sector represents an overall membership of at least 900 and probably in excess of 1000 people across the District.

Many groups are in the performing arts sector, including two significant brass bands, and orchestras and choirs as well as drama and dance groups. Clearly these reach substantial audiences, ranging from the open-air public performance of folk dance teams through the concert and competition appearances of the brass bands, to the shows presented by the drama groups. Based upon this, it could legitimately be estimated that the overall audience reached by the groups in this sector stretches into the tens of thousands.

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This part of the sector is not the whole picture, however. Less formally organised activities, ranging from the community centre or village hall 'panto', through small-scale local and low-key groups in community venues are significant. In many such environments, members and participants undertake crafts or arts activity purely for their own enjoyment. There are also individual groups playing their own particular brands of music, such as those that have emerged through the music development work in Skelmersdale.

What does this add up to for West Lancashire? Is the District home to a vigorous amateur sector? There is obviously a fair amount going on. It has a backbone of traditionally-established bands, groups and societies - a brass band dating back to 1885, and a writers' group that is 40 years old, alongside a performing arts project for young people which dates back to 1996, at least one folk club and two dance schools. It has an orchestra, 2 choirs and a range of drama groups. It has an artists' group, a camera club, a craft guild and a branch of the Embroiderers' Guild.

On the face of it, this seems what might be expected. There may be more activity for which the profile in the community is purely local. However, even allowing for this possibility, for a district with a fair-sized market town and a substantial 'sub-regional' new town, as well as a number of sizeable villages, a larger body of non-professional arts groups and projects might be expected.

Why is the body of work apparently limited? Probably there is a variety of reasons. Facilities are certainly limited and key ones are of relatively poor quality. From outside it looks as if there has been no focus in which new ideas spun off one another, and that key individuals may have worked in their own communities in some isolation. Possibly the schools and colleges may have had less impact on their communities than some others elsewhere. It has not been a priority for WLDC, and there has been limited networking within the sector. It is not clear whether the sector has been stronger in the past.

Whatever the reasons, the stronger the sector, the more opportunities for broad participation, and the more contribution creative activity at the local level can make to the quality of life and coherence of local communities. There are many examples of the way a vigorous body of non-professional arts of different kinds, and involving different age-groups and sections of the community, makes a strong impact on the vitality of smaller communities.

West Lancashire is made up of small and medium-sized communities, and active involvement in cultural activity of different kinds, newcomers alongside natives, commuters alongside those working locally, is a key ingredient in healthy futures for those communities. There is a strong argument for encouraging and actively stimulating new non-professional activity in the District. The recently-developed annual WLDC Community Arts Festival initiative is an important starting point.

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The CCS identified a number of issues for the sector. The key ones were:

- Limited communication within the sector.
- Limited communication with the authority itself.
- No database, and limited awareness within organisations of what is going on in the District.
- No structure for mutual support systems and shared development.
- Poor facilities.

Three years on, how much has changed? The authority has sought to take account of the non-professional sector, within the limits of resources and officer time. 12 non-professional arts and heritage cultural groups were interviewed as a sample of the sector for this strategy. The sample happened to consist predominantly of performing arts groups. The recurring message that emerged (which closely reflected that from the comparable survey of sporting and community organisations) was that almost without exception, respondents were surprised to be asked for their views, and pleased to be contacted.

None of the respondents contacted was previously aware that the Authority was developing a cultural strategy. This is not perhaps surprising, but demonstrates, if nothing else, that there is still scope for better networking, and that WLDC's relationship with the voluntary sector may have better partnership opportunities to offer than it does at present.

Most of the issues that emerged were identical with those identified in 2000, and which were linked to actions and recommendations in the CCS. This does reflect the fact that making a step-change in the sector as a whole has not been a priority for either organisations within it, or WLDC, or any of the other potential stakeholders. The issues highlighted by the sample respondents are summarised as follows:

- The continuing emphasis on the need for recruitment of younger members.
- Continuing disappointment with facilities; poor facilities are a common thread. Uncertainty about the future is common to several responding groups. The inadequacy of the Civic Hall in Ormskirk and the absence of substantial facilities in Skelmersdale recurred. The review of community facilities in Skelmersdale seems to have resulted in one performing arts group taking on the venue it has been using, as principal tenant, and undertaking maintenance and improvement, enabling it to retain its base and providing a home for half a dozen other community groups.
- The lack of communication between groups and with WLDC.
- The perception that the level of information available from the database is not as comprehensive as it might be.
- The continuing, limited awareness within organisations of what is going on in the District; communication is still poor.

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- The absence of mutual support systems and shared development.
- How to develop the overall cultural environment and market place.
- How to enable access for residents excluded by disability, rurality, free time issues (parents, single mothers).
- The need for support with marketing, recruitment and development of organisations.
- The opportunity for the sector to have input into the Cultural Strategy and to be recognised as stakeholders and partners in it when completed.

The Council intends to convene a Voluntary Sector Forum for the specific purpose of planning the development of the non-professional arts and heritage sector. From this starting point, representation of the sector within the Cultural Partnership will be agreed for the long-term.

As a sub-set within the Cultural Partnership, the Council and the sector will develop programmes to strengthen the existing body of activity

The Council, in consultation and partnership with the sector and other stakeholders, including, for instance, the third-tier authorities, will establish programmes of small-scale financial support to encourage new non-professional arts and heritage activity of different kinds across the communities of West Lancashire, over an initial five-year period.

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## PROVING VALUE - ACROSS THE WHOLE SECTOR

### Marketing and market research

Marketing of services in West Lancashire is generally acknowledged, by the Authority's own staff to be 'virtually non-existent' (Best Value Leisure Facilities report - January 2002). Promotional work undertaken is, effectively limited to leaflets outlining facility programmes available at each site and limited coverage in the free newspapers distributed in Sefton and West Lancashire.

Advertising and promotion budgets are low and there is a lack of a marketing strategy. Such a strategy should not, however, as is proposed in the Sporting Concepts Leisure Facilities Review (2000) be concentrated solely upon income generation - particularly if the service is to demonstrate its corporate relevance.

Key issues to be addressed include the improvement of awareness of facilities, services and opportunities and better work with and through intermediary agencies to inform and attract people and groups with whom the district and the service appears to have achieved very little by way of productive contact.

LCA should reviews its marketing publicity and promotion. A cohesive marketing strategy is required. This should:

- Link marketing initiatives to usage/market research data, i.e., inform marketing investment by data about specific aspects of service provision.
- Present marketing and promotion work utilising alternative communication methods; e.g., text messages, email, interpersonal referral.
- Reinforce existing, and further develop formal and informal communication links to local schools, clubs and community groups.
- Use a variety of marketing methods to ensure that information about service performance and positive impact is presented in digestible formats to key decision-makers and partner agencies.
- Commission specific market research (either with partners; e.g., the Year 9 Strata survey) or as part WLDC commitment to deliver key outputs/outcomes.

### Performance measurement and management information

The manner in which the service has been handled corporately over recent years would appear to indicate that key decision makers have limited understanding of either the operational dynamics of the service and the 'cost' of the social value it delivers. The prevailing view of leisure and cultural services as either; primarily, 'trading' or 'luxury' functions of the Council appears to have undermined political appreciation of the wider benefits of the service.

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It is, therefore, crucial that the LCA Service measures and markets itself, its contribution, its performance and its value effectively within the Council.

As is highlighted in the Best Value report (2002) 'corporate' performance management (and this applies across the service) appear to focus upon basic budget monitoring. Quality management information is essential to inform investment decisions, pricing strategy, operational practices, staff training and orientation and to ensure that services provided are 'reaching' targeted groups.

Assessment of 'value for money' requires the application of clear performance indicators and the collation of underpinning information. Performance measures should clearly demonstrate service impact. Management information collected must be integrated and be such that it is possible to identify those who are/not engaged by, and benefiting from, the service provided. Development of improved management information systems is not just an issue for sports facilities.

A quality ICT system operational both across the District's facility stock and (potentially) in remote locations will enable substantially more accurate assessment of the extent to which the service is meeting, or working towards the achievement of, corporate priorities. It is particularly important, if parts of the service are to be externalised, that a baseline position and mechanism for scrutinising 'social performance' and the overall service value to the Council is in place.

Performance measures should clearly demonstrate the impact made by the service and must also take account of the difficulties associated with working with particular groups and generating participation.

Management information collected across the service needs to be integrated and be such that it is possible to identify whether and how services offered are engaging local people. WLDC requires more detailed information in the context of developing a clear justification for investment in leisure/sport. Ways of improving the outputs from the current system need to be considered. This will necessitate extensive training of central staff and staff in individual centres.

The Council should

- Adopt a series of performance indicators that reflect the impact made by the service - and in this context, its value for money
- Identify ways of improving the outputs of management information from the current system, e.g., through provision of appropriate training.

## WEST LANCASHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY

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### Appendix 1: Department for Culture, Media and Sport: List of cultural activities

- Urban and suburban parks, recreation grounds, green spaces, playing fields and allotments.
- Libraries and art galleries.
- Parks and open spaces.
- Sports facilities, activities and events.
- Heritage, design, architecture and archaeology.
- Children's play areas.
- Tourist festivals and attractions.
- Film, television and video.
- Informal recreation such as eating out, walking etc.
- Events and entertainment.
- Parks and open spaces.
- Performing and visual arts.
- Music and dance.
- Literature and writing.
- Museums and local history/archaeology/archives.
- Events and activities which develop from individuals beliefs, values and memories (e.g., religious activities and events)

### Appendix 2: Definition of the creative industries

- Agent for cultural sector
- Architect
- Arts centre
- Arts management
- Clothing/fashion design
- Combined arts
- Consultancy
- Craft making
- Dance performance/teaching
- Exhibition/conference organisation
- Film exhibition/distribution
- Graphic design
- Journalism
- Libraries
- Leisure & entertainment
- Multimedia
- Musical instrument making/repair
- Musical performance/production
- Music recording
- Museums, heritage & archives
- Other design
- Photography
- Performance lighting/sound
- Promo music, comedy, entertainment
- Publishing
- Radio & TV production/broadcast
- Software design
- Sound engineering
- Textile design
- Theatrical production/support
- Theatres, live performance venues
- Training/education
- Video & film making/animation
- Visual artist/sculptor
- Visual arts/crafts/exhibition
- Visual arts/crafts/photography sales
- Writing poetry/fiction/non fiction

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### Appendix 3: Suggested criteria for identifying priority sports

Criteria	High	Fairly high	Avg.	Below avg.	Low	Multiple
Sports with an history and established infra-structure in the District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1
Sports that are accessible to/popular among disabled people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Sports that embrace men and women equally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Sports in which WLDC can make facility and coaching provision available to take people through to higher levels of performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1
Sports that can deliver the social and community development aims/ objectives of the Strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x2
Sports in which facilities are presently available in the District.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x2
Sports with immediate potential to gain access to or develop facilities in the District.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1
Sports where the presence/emergence of key partners may enable substantial development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Sports which offer strong, sustainable opportunities for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x2
Sports that actively encourage participation by disabled people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Sports that, by the nature of the sport and the costs involved in taking part in that sport, do not restrict access to residents of the District.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1
Sports with the potential to significantly improve the range and quality of opportunity to young people in the District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x1.5
Identified Lancashire Sport/Sport England 'Active' sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X2
NGB commitment to working in area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X1



Leisure, Culture & Arts



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