



BRIEF FOR CULTURE CUMBRIA

BACKGROUND

Culture Cumbria was established in 2003 with the aim of working with political, economic, social, and educational partners in Cumbria to:

- Promote the cultural economy of Cumbria.
- Strengthen links between culture, tourism, health & community.
- Highlight cultural role in education at all levels.
- Improve networking, information exchange and communication

Between 2003-2010 Culture Cumbria established itself as an arts networking and communication forum and attempted to establish productive relationships with the Regional Development Agency and other strategic bodies. At this time with the availability of significant capital funds for the arts against an economic development agenda, Culture Cumbria explored ways in which investment into the cultural sector could address such opportunities. It has stood as a sector voice alongside the rural regeneration company, Cumbria Vision and the County Council as an advocate for the arts. It has completed a survey of the creative industries sector in Cumbria, it has supported and engaged with Cumbria County Council's initiative the "Myerscough Study", and it has advocated for and started the establishment of a cultural tourism post within Cumbria Tourism.

CONSTITUTION

Culture Cumbria has adopted a broadly enabling constitution which allows it to function as an organisation taking powers to co-opt board members, raise and disburse funds, etc. In the period 2003-2010 Culture Cumbria was driven forward by Nick Jones and Euan Cartwright who acted as co-secretariat employed by the County Council. Within this structure of a voluntary board and paid secretariat, strategic decision making processes have been reliant on board approval at bi-monthly meetings. Culture Cumbria's capacity to respond swiftly and fleetly to opportunities, threats, change etc. has therefore been compromised along with its ability to implement any business/action plan. On the resignation of Nick and Euan (April 2010) an interim voluntary Executive Committee was formed consisting of Co-Chairs Adrian Lochhead and Kate Whitmarsh, Co-Secretaries Kate Brundrett and Sandra Wood and Treasurer Christian Barnes. The lack of current resource within Culture Cumbria and the Exec Group (financial and human) makes it difficult to undertake the work necessary to a) co-ordinate a rapid, proactive, strategic response to economic and political challenges b) swiftly identify options and opportunities.

The constitution allows for board members to be elected. Arguably in the period 2003-2007 board members have been largely drawn from the public sector, with some representation from arts organisations and limited

representation from independent practitioners. At the 2009 AGM there was a significant change in the composition of the board with new independent board members being elected. There is a lack of clarity about what interests board members do/should represent and what is expected of them.

There has been a perception that the board has operated as a networking forum serving the interests of members rather than representing the sector. It is also argued that Culture Cumbria represents the arts sector rather than the cultural sector. There has been some confusion over the mission of Culture Cumbria with varying written definitions in existence. It is however generally accepted that the purposes for which Culture Cumbria was established have little relevance to the current cultural and economic context. It is also unclear what the need, demand and opportunities for such an organisation are. This lack of clarity has meant that Board, stakeholders and supporters have found it difficult to advocate for Culture Cumbria which has resulted in Culture Cumbria missing out on strategic opportunities. It is not clear who Culture Cumbria is advocating to and on whose behalf.

CUMBRIAN CONTEXT

Cumbria is one of the UK's most sparsely populated districts and has significant variations in the quality of its economic and social life. Cumbria County Council expresses this in these terms

<http://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/AboutCumbria/default.asp>

In addition Cumbria county is served by a two tier local authority system rather than being a unitary authority and has either Local Arts Development Officers in four districts and an arts development agency in one.

In 2008 the Arts Council took the dramatic step of disinvesting the local authorities and the system of local arts development agencies. The subsequent reduction/removal of local authority investment into the local arts sector has had serious repercussions for arts organisations and projects and continues to compromise the leverage of further funds. At this time local authority investment in the arts was 70% of the total sector spend. The repercussions of these changes have been particularly felt at local level.

Public funding cuts will result in diminished support and leadership for the cultural sector previously provided by local, regional and national public sector organisations and agencies.

The culture sector is now beginning to address the process of 'commissioning', a process of delivery that the health and education sectors have been used to for some time.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are few other Cumbrian networks/agencies/organisations attempting to provide the functions that Culture Cumbria currently provides therefore there is little competition from within the sector and arguably there is demand and need for some of the services Culture Cumbria does and could provide.

There has never been a greater need or opportunity for the Cumbrian cultural sector to establish its own solutions to current challenges without reliance on diminishing leadership and support from external agencies.

If Culture Cumbria finds an effective way of a) supporting and managing cultural networks and membership and b) developing more effective and diverse 'non arts' partnerships it may be able to compete and collaborate with the rest of the third sector for funding, commissioning and delivery opportunities.

The County Council has currently in place a time-limited (18 months) consultant tasked with bridging the cultural sector and the LSPs. There is an opportunity now for Culture Cumbria to embrace and adopt this consultant's work.

For more information on the strengths and challenges facing the Cumbrian cultural sector please refer to the John Myerscough summary (see appendices/weblinks).

REVIEW

There is a need to review Culture Cumbria in light of the changed political, economic and cultural environment. At a fundamental level there is a need to question the value of its continued existence. If there is to be a future for Culture Cumbria, it will have to identify relevant purpose and establish whether its corporate form requires change. Any restructuring of corporate form will need to set out how to enable leadership and decision making.

THE BRIEF

Culture Cumbria is commissioning the following work to be undertaken on its behalf.

- Research current Culture Cumbria stakeholder demographic:
 - a) Explore which sector/geographical/business interests current *members* represent.
 - b) Explore which sector/geographical/business interests current external *stakeholders* represent.
 - c) Identify the potential for growth of membership and stakeholders.

- Research and compare Cumbrian networks and membership bodies:
 - a) Compare the membership and management structures of other (cultural, third sector, public and private) membership models in Cumbria
 - b) Research Culture Cumbria's alignment with other (cultural, third sector, public and private) networks, in particular the formal 3rd Sector Network.
 - c) Cross reference with Culture Cumbria's existing research into organisations similar to Culture Cumbria (and identify any networks outside of Cumbria not included in this research that may be of specific relevance).

- Make suggestions for future structure of:

- a) Membership
- b) Management
- c) Business development

Methodology

The methodology is to be agreed with the Executive Committee before the work commences.

Reporting procedure:

As the commissioner, findings of the research will be reported back directly to the Executive Committee, followed by consultation with Culture Cumbria.

Outcomes

The results of the research and recommendations will be both in electronic and written format and presented verbally to the Board of Culture Cumbria.

The process will also identify a set of criteria and conditions which need to be in place for any such recommendations to be adopted by Culture Cumbria and an assessment of the nature of any changes necessary to current conditions in Cumbria to enable that to happen.

The work is to be completed by the end of the financial year 2010/11.

Budget

The proposed budget for this work will be £5,000 to include all fees and VAT.

Expressions of Interest

Applications are being sought from consultants who have significant experience of the Third Sector in Cumbria. Interested applicants should submit a short proposal that outlines their relevant experience, their interest in undertaking this work, a draft methodology and budget. Applications should be submitted by email to Christian Barnes (christian@vistaprojects.co.uk) by September 6th at 12:00 noon. Tenderers should read and comply with the Instructions to Tenderers as detailed here: <http://www.vistaprojects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/20100825-Instructions-to-Tenderers.pdf>

Appendices/web links:

John Myerscough summary <http://www.vistaprojects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Exec-Summary-Myerscough.pdf>

John Myerscough full report <http://www.vistaprojects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Myerscough-report.pdf>

Constitution <http://www.culturecumbria.info/Constitution.asp>

Christian Barnes Paper <http://www.vistaprojects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/20100119-Christian-Barnes-Paper.pdf>

Kate Whitmarsh research summary <http://www.vistaprojects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/20100824-Kate-Whitmarsh-research-summary.pdf>