

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	08 October 2026
TITLE	Gwynedd Culture Plan
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	Pre-scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd
AUTHOR	Roland Evans Assistant Head Economy and Community
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr R. Medwyn Hughes

Why does it need to be scrutinised?

1. The Plan will give future direction for the arts and heritage fields. It will also set a framework for City/Town of Culture applications.
2. Discussions have been held with the culture sector to discuss the vision and objectives.
3. Pre-scrutiny of the Plan prior to its adoption would be an opportunity for the committee to recommend matters that should be considered.

What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- Opportunities and challenges in the field
- Who has been included in developing the plan?
- Is the vision ambitious enough?
- How is it intended to realise the aims?
- How will the Plan's impact be monitored and measured?

Summary and the Key Matters

4. Cyngor Gwynedd has no vision or plan for supporting Culture or the culture sector in the County. This has been highlighted as an issue to be prioritised in the Council Plan.
5. Through collaboration with the culture sector, a vision, principles and action plan have been co-developed.
6. The report summarises the process that has been followed, sets out the vision and principles and presents the draft action plan that has been developed to give members of the Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to identify the opportunities and challenges and comment on the ambition, action plan and monitoring and performance measuring arrangements.

Background / Context

7. The culture field has experienced a challenging period over the past few years. According to the [A Decade of Cuts](#) report by Senedd Cymru's Culture Committee, Wales ranks second from the bottom among European countries in terms of expenditure per head on cultural services.

8. The report makes a number of key recommendations and calls on the Welsh Government to provide:
 - a) More money: More money for culture and sports until expenditure per head is comparable to similar countries.
 - b) Preventative expenditure: Introduce a category of 'preventive' expenditure in future budgets to recognise the value of culture and sport in improving physical and mental well-being and fund them appropriately.
 - c) Strategic support: Develop a collaborative cross-departmental strategy for funding culture and sport, ensuring that these sectors are recognised as key to achieving the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
9. That report also underlines the importance of culture and sport in enriching lives, supporting communities, and improving physical and mental well-being. It calls for immediate action to prevent further decline in these sectors.
10. In 2025, the Welsh Government published 'Priorities to Support Culture in Wales'. Since the election in May 2026, the new Government has initiated a review of the Priorities with the desire to create a clear strategy for Wales.
11. The Welsh Programme for Government 2026-2030 highlights the following relevant priority areas:
 - a) Work with the sector, including our creative industries, to develop and deliver a targeted Culture and Sport Strategy to create a healthier, richer and more resilient Wales.
 - b) Prioritise equal access to the arts, culture, heritage and sport for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, considering how our access policies can support this.
 - c) Invest in the preventive role of culture, heritage and sport to promote good health for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
12. The recent priorities of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales include placing culture at the heart of Wales's well-being agenda, strengthening cultural rights for the people of Wales, and exploring the case for a Culture Bill for Wales that would provide a stronger statutory basis for public bodies to protect, promote and invest in culture as part of their long-term responsibilities.
13. Culture is important to Gwynedd, and Gwynedd is important to Welsh culture, but nevertheless, budget challenges have directly impacted the sector within the County due to savings and cuts.
14. The priority of a Prosperous Gwynedd within the Gwynedd Plan 2023-2028 includes: *Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy*. Within this priority, considering the Development of a Culture Plan for Gwynedd is an operational priority.
15. In terms of 'culture' the cultural sector is broadly defined, in line with Welsh Government practice, to include the arts, museums, libraries, archives, the historic environment and the Creative Industries.

Co-development of vision and principles

16. Given the recent challenges and the fact that Cyngor Gwynedd does not have a culture strategy or plan, we brought together the culture sector within the County to promote networking and get views on establishing a vision and a culture plan/strategy for the County. This was made possible through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity funding

through the 'Diwylliesiant' project and later through funding from the Welsh Government through their revenue support for local cultural sectors in Wales.

17. Many within the sector as well as the Council's cultural services felt that there was a clear gap in Gwynedd without a cultural plan or strategy – particularly when applying for funding and competitions such as the UK City or Town of Culture.
18. The first ever conference and workshops for the sector were held on 18 February 2025 in Nyth, Bangor through a commission to Cwmni'r Frân Wen. Nearly 70 people attended that conference.
19. In light of the conference, there was a strong view that the sector did not want to see a detailed strategy or plan developed, but there was a genuine desire and enthusiasm to establish a vision and principles for the future of the sector with 'action' as a priority rather than 'words' on a shelf.
20. It was therefore agreed to formulate a vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd supported by a relevant Action Plan.
21. A workshop was held on 15 October 2025 to try to move further along the process of developing a vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd. Over 80 people were invited with over 30 attending the workshop at Neuadd Dwyfor, Pwllheli.
22. On the basis of the group discussions and following further consultation with the facilitators, the Council's culture services and the wider sector, a draft vision and principles were agreed.
23. The 'Gwynedd Culture: For Everybody's Well-being' event was held in Portmeirion on the afternoon of 4 March 2026 where there was an opportunity to share the vision and principles, as well as an opportunity to hear about the SPF project – 'Diwylliesiant', which had supported so much cultural activity in Gwynedd over two years. It was also an opportunity to hear examples of how culture supports well-being here in Gwynedd and to share information about the intention to establish a new Culture Network for Gwynedd and introduce the members of the Network's Shadow Steering Board.
24. The following is proposed as a draft vision and principles that have been co-developed with the sector for Gwynedd culture.

Draft vision:

"Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and into the future".

25. Originally, 10 principles for supporting the vision were identified, but following further discussions on 7 July 2026 with the Shadow Steering Board, it was agreed to seek to reduce this number.
26. There are now 6 principles that support the vision:

- i. **Proud of Our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh Language**
Culture celebrates and promotes Gwynedd's unique identity, heritage, creativity, and the Welsh language, sharing them confidently with Wales and the wider world.
- ii. **Culture at the Heart of Life**
Culture is an essential part of the health, wellbeing, education and happiness of the people of Gwynedd, enriching everyday life and creating opportunities to have fun, learn and socialise.
- iii. **Community-Led, Inclusive, Kind and Connected**
Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging.
- iv. **Ambitious, Challenging and Bold**
Culture inspires new ideas, embraces or challenges change, sets high standards and makes the most of opportunities and investment to realise and measure the impact of ambitions.
- v. **Enriching People and Places**
Culture enhances wellbeing, develops skills and talent, and contributes to a strong local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
- vi. **Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations**
Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment, and the unique qualities of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term benefits for future generations.

The Value of Gwynedd Culture

27. To support this work, a commission has been set up by the Council with Welsh Government funding which has enabled us to appoint experts to assist us in supporting our understanding of the culture sector in Gwynedd. The objective of the brief was to:
 - a) Produce an assessment of the economic and social value of the culture sector to the Gwynedd area.
 - b) Create bilingual case studies (film and written) of good practice within the sector locally.
 - c) Create a measurable Action Plan for the sector that reflects the vision and principles.
 - d) Support the Gwynedd Culture Network through a series of networking events, meetings and training.
28. This research strengthens the case for ensuring that we continue to invest in culture in Gwynedd and highlights the economic and social value of the cultural sector.
29. The analysis (**Appendix A**) finds that the cultural sector in Gwynedd generates an estimated total of £316.07 million of annual economic contribution. This includes £121.98 million of direct economic activity generated by cultural organisations and businesses themselves, £135.54 million of indirect impact through supply chain spending, and £58.55 million of induced impact resulting from wage and earnings expenditure within the broader regional economy.

30. Together, these findings show that culture is a significant economic sector in Gwynedd, which supports economic activity that extends far beyond the organisations that directly provide cultural services and activities.
31. The direct contribution of the sector reflects the breadth and diversity of cultural activity taking place throughout the county. The largest proportion of the direct economic value generated is that derived from the Creative Industries and the wider cultural business sector, which is estimated to contribute £77.63 million per annum.
32. Heritage attractions, museums and archives contribute an additional £28.62 million, emphasising the importance of Gwynedd's unique historic environment and its internationally renowned cultural assets.
33. The performing arts and events, applied crafts and arts, libraries and literature, along with the visual arts and galleries, all make valuable additional contributions. This shows that the sector is acting as a coordinated cultural economy, rather than a series of separate and independent activities.
34. A further finding from the report is that the cultural sector generates significantly wider social value. Using well-being valuation methods that are in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance, the assessment estimates that cultural activity in Gwynedd generates £178.02 million of social value each year.
35. This includes value related to economic outcomes, health and well-being, social and community cohesion, education and skills, environmental stewardship, and cultural identity.
36. Although the main focus of the report is the economic impact, the magnitude of the wider social value identified reinforces the conclusion that culture makes a significant contribution not only to the economy of Gwynedd, but also to the quality of life of its residents and the strength of its communities.
37. These findings show that investing in culture provides benefits that extend far beyond just economic activity, supporting individual well-being, community resilience, skills development, the Welsh language, and the county's unique cultural identity.
38. These findings show that culture is not only an important part of Gwynedd's identity and heritage, but is also a significant economic sector that sustains employment, supports businesses, attracts and drives visitor spending, and contributes to the wider economic resilience of the county.

Action Plan for Culture in Gwynedd 2027 - 2035

39. By considering the research into economic and social value, the agreed vision and principles, as well as the feedback from the sector that action is the most important thing rather than 'words'; an action plan for culture in Gwynedd was developed.
40. A workshop of the Gwynedd Culture Shadow Steering Group to develop an Action Plan was held virtually on 9 June 2026 and in person at Storiell on 7 July 2026.
41. The draft Action Plan (**Appendix 2**) highlights areas of action to be adopted to support and develop the culture sector in Gwynedd.
42. Up to 30 actions are highlighted that have been divided into foundational, short term, medium term and ambitious implementation periods.
43. It is expected that the Culture Steering Board will take ownership of monitoring the implementation and delivery of the Action Plan once arrangements have been confirmed.

44. The final Plan will identify appropriate measures that the sector can adopt to monitor the implementation and delivery of the action plan.

Resources and funding

45. It should be noted that additional resources will not derive from the formulation of a vision, principles and action plan – but it will be a way of pulling together the culture sector in Gwynedd and a means of applying for financial resources from external funding sources.
46. In parallel with the vision and principles, it is also planned to establish the Gwynedd Culture Network as a forum that will share good practice, support networking and own the vision and principles. A Shadow Board has already been set up and membership has been agreed for 2026.
47. This network will be an evolution of the Creative Gwynedd network already established as an arts network in the county, and will build on the success and learn from the operation of that network while adapting into a cultural network for Gwynedd.
48. This is the first time that Gwynedd has supported a network for the culture sector as a whole and will be an evolution of the Creative Gwynedd forum.
49. It is suggested by the culture sector that these are visions and principles that could be adopted by Cyngor Gwynedd, but with support and ownership from the sector to be realised through the new culture network and culture steering board.

Consultation

50. Extensive consultation was carried out in the development of the Vision, principles and Action Plan through representatives from the culture sector in Gwynedd as well as Cyngor Gwynedd's culture services.
51. The consultation sessions held are highlighted in the report.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

52. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out clear well-being goals to ensure the well-being of future generations.
53. This work addresses each of the 7 well-being goals and this is highlighted in the agreed vision and principles.
54. Recently, the Future Generations Commissioner's Office has been prioritising the field of 'A Wales with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language', and a representative from Cyngor Gwynedd attended a study visit to Bradford where they had placed Culture at the centre of their corporate plans. We received a presentation from a representative of the Future Generations Commissioner's Office during our event at Portmeirion in March 2026, highlighting the importance of culture to the act and highlighting the Office's priorities, and we have kept in contact with the Office when developing this work.
55. Residents and service users were **included** by holding a public culture event at the beginning of the process for anyone who had an interest in the field of culture in Gwynedd. Over 70 people attended that meeting at Nyth, Bangor. The vision, the principles and the Action Plan were all developed following this initial meeting. A second public meeting was held in Portmeirion to present and receive feedback on the work.

56. **Collaboration** has taken place throughout the process of developing a vision and principles for Culture in Gwynedd, as well as the Action Plan. This ensures joint-ownership of the work when looking to the future and establishing a Culture Network for Gwynedd will ensure that the collaboration will continue in the future as we implement and support the culture sector.
57. The establishment of a Gwynedd Culture Network with a Steering Board will ensure that we **prevent** problems from arising or being able to respond to them in partnership before they worsen. Regular networking and collaboration will ensure that we prevent problems from arising.
58. It has been agreed for the vision and principles to be **long-term** in order to pull the sector together. The Action Plan which will be reviewed regularly sets out priorities for action over the short, medium and long term and there will be an opportunity to revise and evolve during the annual review process.
59. To ensure **integration**, other public bodies were invited to attend the events to develop the vision, principles and Action Plan including: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Eryri National Park Authority, Cyngor Gwynedd Cultural Services and other cultural partners from North Wales.

Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-economic Duty

60. A Composite Impact Assessment has been prepared and can be found in [Appendix 3](#).
61. The Assessment highlights the opportunities that exist through the development of this work to collaborate to ensure that everyone benefits from Gwynedd's culture.
62. The Plan will ensure that Culture in Gwynedd collaborates towards a single vision and principles and action plan that will ensure the best for the people of Gwynedd.
63. It highlights how implementation is planned to be monitored and assessed and the structure proposed to be established through the Gwynedd Culture Network supported by a Strategic Board to promote collaboration, the implementation of the Action Plan and to monitor the success of the plan.

Next Steps

64. It is intended to consider any comments and suggestions made by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in further discussions with the Shadow Steering Board before the vision, principles and Action Plan are discussed and adopted by the Cabinet during their meeting on 10 November.
65. It is intended to launch the work on 19 November 2026 at an event to celebrate the value of Gwynedd's culture.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Assessment of the Economic and Social Value of The Culture Sector in Gwynedd

Appendix 2 – Draft Action Plan

Appendix 3 – Composite Impact Assessment