MEETING	Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet
DATE	10 November 2026
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr R.Medwyn Hughes
CONTACT OFFICER	Roland Evans Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department
TITLE	Our Culture, Our Future: A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd

Decision sought

1. To accept the report and acknowledge the research into the Value of Culture in Gwynedd
2. To approve Our Culture, Our Future: A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd (Appendix A)
3. To approve the implementation and monitoring arrangements as outlined in the report and Plan.

The reason for the need for a decision

4. Cyngor Gwynedd has no vision or plan for supporting Culture or the culture sector in the County. This has been highlighted as an opportunity to be prioritised in the Council Plan.
5. Research into the value of culture in Gwynedd shows the importance of the sector economically and socially (Appendix C).
6. By working with the culture sector, a statement, vision, principles and action plan have been co-developed in Our Culture, Our Future.
7. This report summarises the process that has been followed, presents the statement, vision and principles and provides an overview of the content of Our Culture, Our Future: A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd.

Introduction

8. Culture 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 bottom among European countries in terms of expenditure per head on cultural services.
9. The Senedd Committee's report makes a number of key recommendations and calls on the Welsh Government to provide more funding, recognise the importance of culture as a preventive expenditure and calls for strategic support to fund culture and sport across departments in order to achieve the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales 2015) Act.
10. The Programme for Government for Wales 2026-2030 highlights the following relevant priority areas:
    - 1.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.
    - 1.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.

1.c. Invest in the preventive role of culture, heritage and sport to promote good health for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

11. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' recent priorities include placing culture at the heart of Wales' well-being, developing clearer cultural rights for citizens, and exploring the case for a Culture for Wales Bill which would give public bodies a stronger basis to protect, promote and invest in culture as part of their long-term responsibilities.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.

Rationale and justification for recommending the decision

15. 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 seek views on establishing a vision and culture plan/strategy for the County. This was made possible through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity funding via the *'Diwyllesiant'* project and later through funding from the Welsh Government via its revenue support for local cultural sectors in Wales.
16. Many within the sector as well as the Council's culture services felt that there was a clear gap in Gwynedd without a culture plan or strategy – particularly when applying for funding and competitions such as the UK City or Town of Culture.
17. The first ever conference and workshops for the sector were held on 18 February 2025 in Nyth, Bangor via a commission to Cwmni'r Frân Wen. Nearly 70 people attended that conference.
18. 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.
19. It was agreed to formulate a vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd supported by a relevant Action Plan.
20. A workshop was held on 15 October 2025 to progress the development of the work. Over 80 people were invited with over 30 attending the workshop at Neuadd Dwyfor, Pwllheli.
21. 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 upon.
22. A 'Gwynedd Culture: For Everybody's Well-being' event was held in Portmeirion on 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 – *'Diwyllesiant'*, 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.

23. Below is the draft statement, vision and principles which have been co-developed with the sector for Gwynedd's culture and which takes into account the comments made in the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee:

    Statement:

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

    Vision:

    Our culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and alive. Rooted in the Welsh language and belonging to everyone, together we want to promote, celebrate and support our culture – today and into the future.

24. Originally, 10 principles for supporting the statement were identified, but following further discussions on 7 July 2026 with the Shadow Steering Board, it was agreed to seek to reduce this number to 6:

    i. Proud of our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh language
    ii. Culture at the Root of Life
    iii. Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected
    iv. Ambitious, Challenging and Bold
    v. Enriching People and Places
    vi. Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations

The Value of Gwynedd Culture

25. 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 and to develop an action plan. (Appendix C)
26. 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.
27. The analysis shows that the cultural sector in Gwynedd generates an estimated annual economic contribution of £316.07 million.
28. Culture accounts for approximately 11% of Gwynedd's total economic output, placing it alongside other major sectors in the county's economy.
29. In addition to its economic strength, culture produces £178.02 million of social value each year including health and well-being, social cohesion, education and skills, identity and sense of place.
30. 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.

Action Plan for Culture in Gwynedd 2027 - 2035

31. 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. (Appendix B)
32. 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 Storiel on 7 July 2026.
33. The draft Action Plan highlights areas of action to be adopted to support and develop the culture sector in Gwynedd.
34. 34 actions are highlighted that have been divided into foundational, short term, medium term and ambitious implementation periods. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly.
35. 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.

Resources and funding

36. It should be noted that additional resources will not derive from the formulation of Our Culture, Our Future – 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.
37. In parallel with the Plan, it is also intended to establish the Gwynedd Culture Network for the first time - 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.
38. 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 and adapt it into a cultural network for Gwynedd.
39. 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.

Next Steps

40. It is intended to celebrate the value of the sector and launch Our Culture, Our Future – A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd; at a special event in Bangor on 19 November 2026.
41. Following this, the Shadow Culture Board will be formalised evolving the arrangements and composition of the current Creative Gwynedd committee.
42. The Culture Board and the Culture Network will immediately implement the Action Plan and monitor its implementation.

Consultation

43. Extensive consultation was carried out in the development of the Plan through representatives from the culture sector in Gwynedd as well as Cyngor Gwynedd's culture services.
44. Members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise the framework at their meeting on 8 October 2026.

45. Comments were made that the Welsh language needed to be more prominent in the work and the importance of culture to sustain the Welsh language, that the Action Plan needed clear measures and that it is ambitious. The Committee's decision was to:
    45.a. Consider revisiting the wording of the vision to include a specific reference to the Welsh Language, wording the vision to note an ambition/aim An alternative vision was provided by the Chair of the Committee for further consideration, namely: "*As the Welsh language is at its strongest in Wales in Gwynedd and therefore the county is expected to lead in enriching and forming the Welsh civilisation and thus to contribute to the cultural diversity of humanity, we aim to make and keep the Welsh language an integral part of the life of the county.*"
    45.b. Request for the service to report on data that compares the outward migration in similar areas (such as the Lake District) to compare with Gwynedd's situation to see whether this culture anchors people to the County.
46. The vision proposed by the Chair and the comments made in the Committee were considered and discussed by the Culture Network Shadow Board:
    46.a. The statement and vision have been adapted to include the Welsh language in order to highlight this link more clearly and the importance of culture to support the language.
    46.b. While agreeing on the importance of having ambition, there were strong feelings that the statement and vision were important as they had been co-created, and that the ambition of achieving the statement would be entirely dependent on the resources that might be available.
    46.c. It was felt that elements of the alternative vision by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee were important to be included within the narrative of the Plan and that has been done within the introduction.
    46.d. The Action Plan includes potential measures as well as one action relating to the identification of common measures across the sector.
47. The Department will gather information from other areas to consider whether culture is responsible for anchoring people more in Gwynedd than in other rural areas.

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

48. This work addresses each of the 7 well-being goals and this is highlighted in the agreed vision and principles.
49. Residents and service users have been **included** by holding a public culture event at the beginning of the process for anyone who had an interest in culture in Gwynedd.
50. **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.
51. Establishing the 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.
52. It has been agreed for the vision and principles to be for the **long-term** in order to draw 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 add to it in review.

53. To ensure **integration**, other public bodies were invited to attend the events to develop the vision, the principles and the 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

54. A Composite Impact Assessment has been prepared and can be found in Appendix D.
55. The Assessment highlights the opportunities that exist through the development of this work to collaborate to ensure that everyone benefits from Gwynedd's culture.
56. 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.
57. 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.

Observations of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer

“The adoption of this Strategy provides an opportunity for Cabinet to set the direction and priorities in this key area. I am satisfied with the propriety of the decision sought”.

Chief Finance Officer

"I am satisfied that the adoption of the decision sought will not create a new financial commitment. Nevertheless, from a financial point of view I support the plan as it will contribute to creating a solid foundation for prioritising resources within the cultural sphere in the future."

Appendices

Appendix A – Our Culture, Our Future: A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd 2035
Appendix B – Our Culture, Our Future: Action Plan
Appendix C – Assessment of the value of Culture to Gwynedd
Appendix D – Composite Impact Assessment