Our Culture, Our Future

A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd

culture

Culture consists of activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of civilization and of people's minds.

Collins Dictionary

Culture is a concept that encompasses the social behaviour, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, attitudes, and habits of the individuals in these groups

Wikipedia

A word from the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community

On behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd, I am honoured to present this plan, Our Culture, Our Future: A Plan for Culture in Gwynedd.

Culture is important to Gwynedd, and Gwynedd is important to the culture of Wales and the world. The County has been a furnace of creativity for centuries and sustaining this flame is vital to the continuation of our identity, the Welsh language and our rich and diverse traditions into the future.

What is special about this work is that it is not a plan drawn up by Cyngor Gwynedd on its own - it has been co-developed with partners across the County.

Over the past two years we have held conferences, workshops and public events across Gwynedd in order to gather views and build consensus. Well over a hundred people have been involved in this process.

The clear message that came from the discussions that took place was that partners did not want another strategy to gather dust on a shelf. They wanted a clear statement and vision, agreed principles and a practical action plan that would lead to decisive action. That is what we have here.

The research commissioned and seen here estimates that the culture sector contributes over £316m a year to Gwynedd's economy. In addition, the social value created is estimated to be worth over £178 million every year. Those figures are confirmation that investing in culture makes economic as well as social sense.

We are all aware of the financial challenges we face, but this is not just a matter of supporting culture activities. It's about supporting jobs, developing skills, strengthening communities, protecting the Welsh language, improving health and well-being, and creating opportunities for people to live, work and thrive here in Gwynedd.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the co-development. Collaboration through the new network will be absolutely essential to the success of the delivery of this plan; and I wish all partners well as we move to deliver the plan together in order to maintain, celebrate, support and grow our culture for our future.

Cllr R.Medwyn Hughes

Introduction

We are all aware of the cultural wealth of Gwynedd and the significant contribution that our culture makes to Welsh civilisation, to the Welsh language and to the diversity of our world.

In light of this, an opportunity has been identified to formally recognise and declare the value and importance of culture, affirming its key role in enriching the lives of the people of today, securing its legacy for the future and highlighting its contribution to the cultural diversity of humanity.

By bringing our partners together to co-develop this Plan and to promote collaboration for the benefit of our culture and for the future benefit of all, we are celebrating and recognising its importance.

A statement, vision and principles were co-developed with partners from across Gwynedd and an action plan has been developed with members of the Gwynedd Culture Network Shadow Steering Board with input from a dedicated questionnaire for partners.

Our partners' desire was not to create a 'strategy' to gather dust or agree on an 'ambition' beyond our reach. It was the partners' desire to co-create a statement and vision that clearly set out our perspective and aspiration for a culture supported by clear principles and an action plan that is easy to measure and owned by all.

What is our definition of culture?

In this plan, 'culture' is broadly defined, in line with Welsh Government practice, to include the arts, museums, libraries, archives, the historic environment and the Creative Industries.

Culture in Gwynedd

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 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".

Principles

1. **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.

2. **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 .

3. **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.

4. **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.

5. **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.

6. **Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations**

   Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment, and the special qualities of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term benefits for future generations.

The Value of Gwynedd Culture

The culture sector is a significant part of Gwynedd's economy, much larger than many people realise, and is driven by the work of creative professionals across the county.

Although the main focus of the 'Value of Culture' 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.

Key finding:

*"The analysis shows that the culture sector in Gwynedd generates an estimated annual economic contribution of **£316.07 million**."*

This includes:

- **£121.98m direct impact** - activity produced by cultural organisations and creative businesses.
- **£135.54m indirect impact** - spending across the supply chain.
- **£58.55m incentive impact** - expenditure on salaries in the local economy.

Culture accounts for approximately **11% of Gwynedd's total economic output**, placing it alongside other major sectors in the county's economy.

Where does the value come from?

- **Creative industries and cultural businesses:** £77.63m
- **Heritage, museums and archives:** £28.62m
- **Performing arts and events:** £6.51m
- **Applied crafts and arts:** £6.62m
- **Libraries and literature:** £1.42m
- **The visual arts and galleries:** £1.18m

These figures show a culturally diverse and interconnected economy, where creatives contribute at all levels, from freelancers and artists to producers, volunteers and organisations.

In addition to its economic strength, culture produces **£178.02 million social value every year**.

This includes:

- **£44.51m** health and well-being benefits
- **£71.21m** impacts on employment, the visitor economy and the supply chain
- **£26.72m** value derived from social and community cohesion

- **£17.78m** value in education and skills
- **£9.41m** value associated with cultural identity and the Welsh language
- **£8.39m** environmental value and value derived from a sense of place

Culture strengthens communities, supports mental health and well-being, builds confidence, connects generations, and reinforces Gwynedd's unique identity. This is often achieved through creative work, workshops, performances and practitioner-led projects across the county.

The evidence is clear: **culture is a vital infrastructure, not just a "nice to have".**

It:

- Supports local jobs and businesses
- Attracts visitors and investment
- Strengthens towns and communities
- Promotes the Welsh language and local identity
- Improves well-being and quality of life
- Contributes to education, skills development and opportunities for young people

As stated in the report:

"Culture should be understood as an important part of Gwynedd's economic infrastructure, rather than as an optional or marginal activity."

For creative professionals, this recognition is important. It places cultural work at the heart of Gwynedd's future and highlights the value of creative labour, skills and creative practice. It also recognises the significant contribution that artists, freelancers, creative practitioners and cultural organisations make to the county's economy, communities and well-being.

Action Plan

Given the agreed statement, vision, principles and research into economic and social value as well as the feedback from partners that action is the most important thing rather than 'words'; an Action Plan has been developed.

The Gwynedd Culture Action Plan currently sets out 34 practical, funded and measurable actions designed to strengthen culture across the county.

Every action is linked to one or more of the six agreed principles, making the plan easy to navigate and ensuring that all elements contribute directly to Gwynedd's culture statement and support the people who provide cultural activity at grassroots level.

The plan is structured entirely around these six principles. Every action clearly shows how it contributes to them, from grassroots participation and creative health work to large opportunities, fair pay, sustainability, advocacy and long-term ambitions. The principles provide a common direction for the sector and a practical way to track progress over time.

Every action specifies:

- Lead organisation or clear partnership
- Realistic timetable
- Resources needed
- Simple methods of measuring progress

The plan balances ambition with practicality, combining high-impact opportunities with practical actions that we can start to deliver immediately. It provides a collaborative delivery pathway for organisations, freelancers, communities and Cyngor Gwynedd to work together, ensuring that culture continues to enrich people and places across the county.

For creative practitioners, the plan offers clearer pathways to support, stronger networks, and new opportunities to inform and shape the future of Gwynedd's culture.

This will be a live document that adapts, evolves and develops over time as the Culture Network is established and matures and as collaboration bears fruit.

It is planned to review the priorities for implementation and progress in delivering at least once a year at the Network and Steering Board meetings.

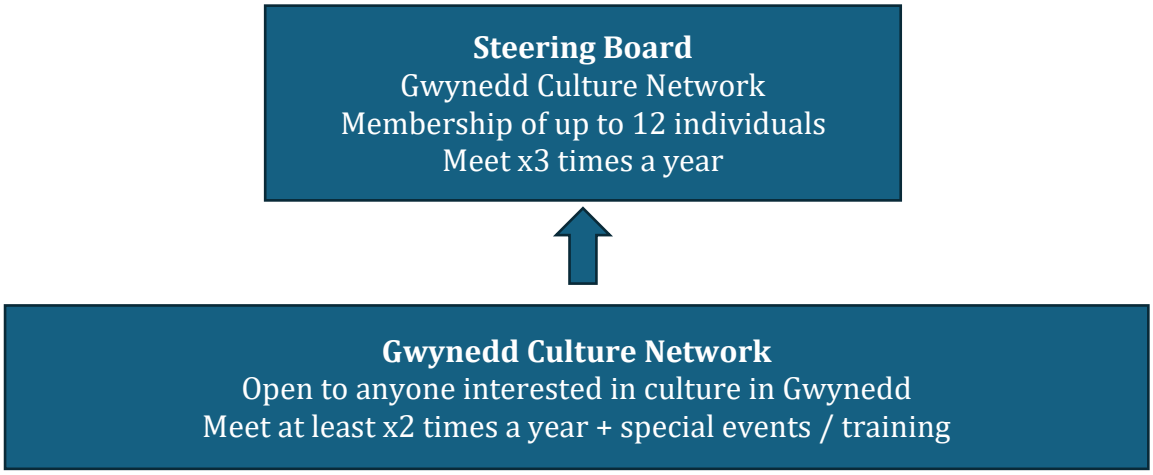
Gwynedd Culture Network and monitoring of implementation

It is planned to establish the Gwynedd Culture Network as a new forum that will share good practice, support networking and own Plan.

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.

The Culture Steering Board will take ownership of monitoring the implementation and delivery of the Action Plan once arrangements have been confirmed. When active, it is anticipated that up to 12 members of the Culture Steering Board with a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer will be elected from among the members of the Board.

A clear proposal from the cultural partners is that the statement and principles are ones that should 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.



Resources and funding

The evidence gathered will help Cyngor Gwynedd and its partners to make informed decisions about where to focus efforts, investment and collaboration, including the support provided to artists, freelancers and creative organisations.

No additional budget or resources will result directly from the adoption of this Plan, but the work will be used to:

- **Guide future decisions about culture in Gwynedd**, ensuring that culture is recognised as an essential element of the county's well-being, identity and economy.
- **Strengthen funding applications and investment cases**, by using robust evidence to demonstrate the magnitude and impact of cultural activity.
- **Support collaboration across the sector**, with a Culture Network and co-ordination to support the delivery of the plan.
- **Improve the way data is collected and monitored**, by using common and consistent measures that help track progress against the six principles.
- **Prioritise actions that deliver the greatest benefit**, balancing ambition with practical work that can be started immediately.
- **Build a resilient and confident cultural ecosystem**, where creative practitioners, organisations and communities can thrive together.

Together, the value assessment and the Action Plan set a clear direction for long-term cultural development in Gwynedd.

This direction is evidence-based, co-created with the sector, and designed to make a meaningful and lasting impact for people and places across the county. It provides a solid foundation for maximising the contribution of culture to Gwynedd's economy, communities, well-being and identity for years to come.

Strategic Background

According to the A Decade of Cuts report by the Senedd Cymru Culture Committee, Wales ranks second from the bottom among European countries in terms of expenditure per head on cultural services.

The report makes a number of key recommendations and calls on the Welsh Government to provide more funding, preventative spending and strategic support.

The Programme for Government for Wales 2026-2030 highlights the following relevant priority areas for culture:

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.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 gives clear priority to culture as one of the well-being goals - a Wales with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. The Commissioner recently highlighted placing culture at the heart of Wales' well-being as one of his priorities.

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.

Culture is given a central place in a number of plans and strategies by Cyngor Gwynedd and other local organisations, including the following:

- Gwynedd and Eryri 2035: Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan
- Gwynedd 2035: An economy that works for all
- Our Area Plans
- The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site Management Plan
- Cyngor Gwynedd's Language Strategy
- Gwynedd Schools Strategy 2026-2036
- Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan
- Gwynedd Libraries Scheme: Living Libraries
- Eryri Plan

Contact us

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