

ArtsTaunton | 8 July 2015

CULTURE PAYS!

A summary of the key points made during a strategic debate about how culture could regenerate the economies of Taunton Deane and Somerset. The speakers were:

- **Sir Peter Bazalgette** Chairman, Arts Council England
- **Dr Harry Brünjes** Chairman, English National Opera
- **Anna Pepperall** Public Art Curator, Gateshead Council
- **Michael Loveday** Norwich Heritage Economic & Regeneration Trust

MACROECONOMIC EVIDENCE

Recent detailed studies reveal the contribution that culture makes to the UK economy:

- culture is worth £7.7bn in gross value added to the British economy, an increase of 35.8% between 2010 and 2013;
- for every £1 invested in culture, an additional £1.06 is generated in the economy;
- 1 in 12 UK jobs are in the creative economy, an increase of 5% in 2013-2014, compared to 2.1% jobs increase in the wider economy;
- Britain invests a smaller percentage (0.3%) of GDP in culture than other European countries.

EVIDENCE OF CULTURE DRIVING LOCAL ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Case studies were presented to show how local economies are stimulated by investment in arts, and entertainment, particularly investment in public art, buildings and infrastructure.

Top-line benefits:

- high value inward investment is attracted by cultural ambition and innovation;
- greater footfall and visitor numbers are attracted by a high quality cultural 'offer';
- growth in small business opportunities and in employment;

Anna Pepperall, who led the commissioning team responsible for Gateshead's iconic *Angel of the North*, emphasised **political leadership**, and **ambition** are essential to drive cultural investment.

She added, "No-one used to go to Gateshead! It was a backwater. Then, the Council moved from viewing art in isolation, to placing it at the heart of their framework for the area's proactive economic regeneration."

Referring to *Angel of the North*, Anna Pepperall said: "What it did for the area was extraordinary. It gave us huge opportunities for marketing and

merchandising. Together with several new arts venues featuring world-class architectural design, the *Angel* has transformed Gateshead into a key North East destination and creative hub, as well as injecting great pride into the local community".

Until the new venues were developed inward investment had been low. One of the venues, Sage Gateshead, now has a GVA impact of £8.5m pa making it the most significant arts venue outside London. The Sage has contributed £283m in 10 years to the regional economy - three times the public funding (capital and revenue) invested in it.

Sir Peter Bazalgette, illustrating the transformational effect that even one iconic arts project can have, drew attention to Margate, a seaside town that had been in decline since the 1970s. There, Turner Contemporary, a gallery intended as a catalyst for the town's regeneration, attracted its millionth visitor three years after opening. Its development is also an example of the importance of political leadership in the face of local opposition. Public consultation revealed greater support for a new swimming pool than for a gallery!

Sir Peter emphasised that visitors in search of culture are the best visitors - they spend more!

Aptly summarising the message delivered by all speakers, Sir Peter quoted Joe Anderson, the plain speaking Liverpool Mayor: "**Arts and culture are the rocket fuel of economic regeneration**"

THE WAY FORWARD

As the next step, **Michael Loveday** advised ArtsTaunton to produce a Cultural Route Map or Charter for everyone to sign up to it.

In the Q&A session that closed the conference, Somerset Cricket chairman **Andy Nash** reminded everyone that in 2019 Taunton will host World Cup matches and called for a 'grand alliance' between sports and culture groups to promote Taunton.

©ArtsTaunton | July 2015

ArtsTaunton is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England. Charity number 1174014