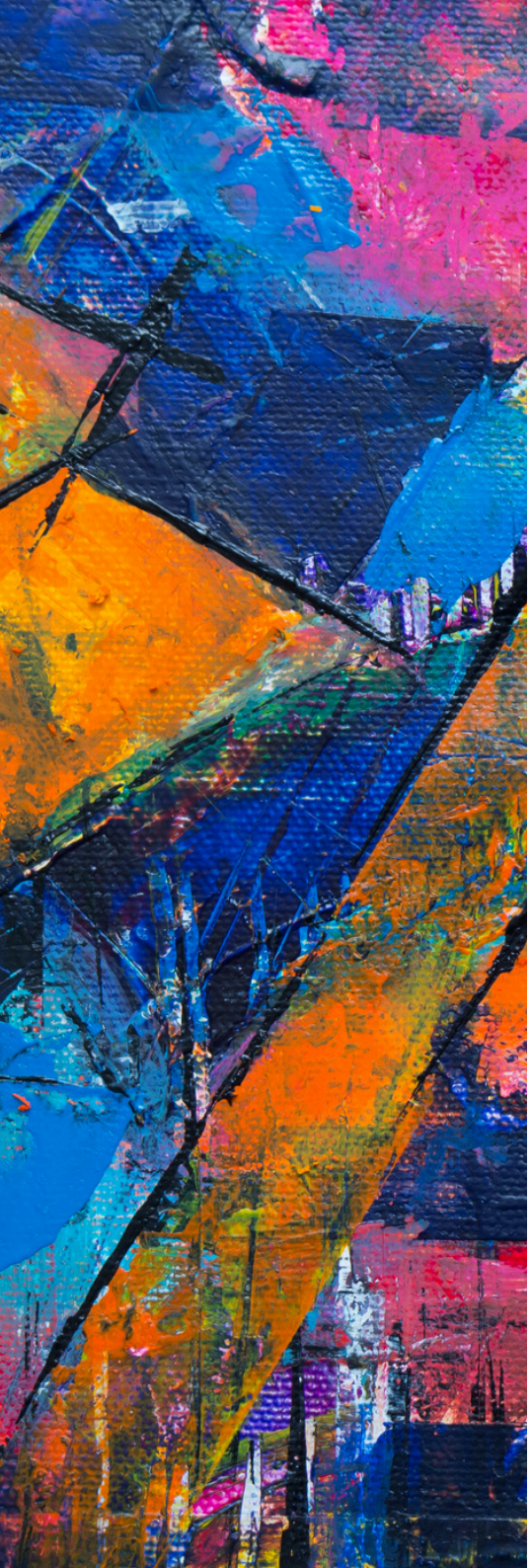

South Derbyshire District Council
ARTS & CULTURE STRATEGY
2026 -2031
South Derbyshire District Council



South Derbyshire District Council Arts & Culture Strategy 2025 -2030

South Derbyshire District Council

South Derbyshire District Council's Arts and Culture Strategy is intended to establish a clear and structured framework to develop, support, and promote art activities and events across the district. The strategy will reflect our commitment to making arts and culture an integral part of community life, creating opportunities for creativity, connection, and celebration.

Embedding arts at the heart of the councils' work, ensures we build a district that is vibrant, inclusive and resilient. Through collaboration with partners, investment in local talent and accessible programming, the strategy will ensure that arts and events strengthen health and wellbeing, drive economic growth and create a community where residents feel connected and inspired.

The Arts and Culture Strategy has been guided by The South Derbyshire District Council plan 2024 - 2028, which prioritises the Council's work to enhance the District for its local people, creating a great place to live, work and visit.

The Council plan for 2024 – 2028 focuses on:

- Shaping our Environment.
- Driving our Economy.
- Supporting our communities.
- Transforming our Council.

The strategy has been guided by various consultations with key partners, art organisations, artists and the local community. This includes workshop and public online survey. A first draft of this document was also distributed to key representatives from across our creative community for feedback.

The strategy focuses on four main priority areas:
· Unique Places and Spaces.
· Inspiring arts for all.
· Growth and promotion of partnerships.
· Health and wellbeing.

Arts and culture are at the heart of a thriving community and can play a vital role in making an area a prosperous and attractive place to live. The arts brings people together, sparking creativity and creating spaces where everyone feels a sense of belonging. The strategy reflects our commitment to supporting local talent, promoting participation, and ensuring that arts and culture are accessible to all. By embedding arts and culture at the heart of Council's work, we aim to build a vibrant, welcoming District where residents and visitors can come together to learn, celebrate and grow.





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Context

The significance of the arts and its impact nationally and locally.

- **Arts and culture sector is a cornerstone of the UK's identity and economy, contributing £124 billion in GVA and supporting 2.4 million jobs nationally.**
- **The Uk stands out as one of only three countries worldwide that export more music than they import.**
- **Uk ranks as the second-largest global market for visual art.**
- **Between 2000 and 2023, UK authors earned more Nobel Prizes in Literature than any other nation.**
- **UK actors achieved the second-highest number of Academy Awards for acting.**
- **Five of the world's top 30 higher-education institutions for art and design are based in the UK, with the Royal College of Art holding the number one position.**

Arts and culture are fundamental to shaping society and fostering understanding of the world around us. The creative industries drive economic growth and innovation whilst removing barriers to opportunities. Beyond the creative industries significant economic contribution, the arts promote education, social inclusion and the development of creative skills essential for future generations.

At a local level, arts and events enhance community wellbeing, create vibrant and distinctive spaces, attract tourism and investment and support both physical and mental health. Embedding creativity into public life strengthens communities, celebrating shared identity, and ensuring equal access to experiences for all residents and visitors.





Focus Areas

Unique Places and Spaces

- Use art to revitalise and enhance public spaces.
- Advocate the use of local venues and spaces for arts activities and events.
- Promote and encourage community led creative projects.
- Work with economic development team, communities, venues, partners and artists to promote and develop the arts offering in the district.
- Use the arts to create unique experiences, encouraging tourism to the district.
- Assist economic growth by ensuring that a programme of events is planned to encourage people into the District.
- Use the arts to attract investment from public and private sectors.
- Increase the use of open spaces, reclaiming areas and helping reduce levels of crime and vandalism by creating a sense of ownership and security
- Promote unique heritage and culture in district.

Inspiring arts for all

- Support in the raising of funds as for creative projects.
- Increase funding for the arts in the district.
- Celebrate and provide opportunities for local talent through events.
- Raise the profile of the district's arts activity.
- Ensuring access to arts and culture is available to all parts of the community.
- Providing opportunities for young people.
- Use the art as a tool to educate on sustainable practices and the climate emergency.





Growth and promotion of partnerships

- Enable and support sharing and networking between different arts and culture organisations.
- Work in partnership with local, regional and national organisations
- Continue to support key partners.
- Strengthen the infrastructure of local not for profit arts organisations and individuals.
- Support communities and partners to develop their own arts and culture resources, events, activities to create stronger community cohesion.
- Strengthen the infrastructure of local not for profit arts organisations and individuals.

Health and wellbeing

- Use the arts and culture to improve health and wellbeing, as well as promoting lifelong learning.
- Advocate for using the arts to make a healthier, safer, skilled and unique communities.
- Promote and develop events that support local people, promoting healthier lifestyles, improving mental health and supporting marginalised groups and individuals.



Collaboration Workshop

Collaboration with partners and the community is vital to achieving the objectives of the Arts and Culture Strategy. To continue to build and strengthen our network and ensure continued support for local art organisations and groups, we decided it was vital to involve these voices from the start. A dedicated workshop was held to gather feedback on the key priorities, helping to shape the strategy so it truly reflects the needs of local communities and organisations. This collaborative process identified priorities, generated practical solutions and established a shared vision for delivery.

Our key partners included:
- Melbourne Arts.
- People Express.
- Arts Derbyshire.
- National Forest.
- East Staffordshire Events.
- South Derbyshire Council Parks and Green Spaces Team.
- South Derbyshire Council Economic Development Team.
- Rosliston Forestry Centre.
- Rosliston Environmental Education team.
- Rosliston Artists.
- Sharpe's Pottery Museum.



Collaboration Workshop

Unique places and spaces

We asked participants to identify the most important priorities to use art to revitalise and enhance public spaces.

- Transforming Spaces & Celebrating Heritage
- Events & Festivals
- Venues & Spaces - hubs, mapping, improving visibility, studios showcasing current spaces.
- Outdoor & Public Art
- Emerging Opportunities - digital and collaborations.

Growth and promotion of partnerships

We asked participants to identify how we could support and build relationship with local organisations, artists, businesses etc.

- Supporting Artists and businesses.
- Funding resources - pathways to access funding.
- Partnerships and Networks - volunteering network, building relationships, cohesive South Derbyshire.
- Education and Community Engagement.
- Events and Festivals - county wide events, supporting initiatives.
- Communication and reporting.

Inspiring arts for all

We asked participants how we could ensure the arts is accessible and encourages creativity and innovation.

- Accessibility and affordability - small grant schemes, funding support, income generating opportunities.
- Collaboration and networking - galleries, artists, villages, councils.
- Supporting local talent
- Diversity and innovation - celebrate unique art forms
- Outreach and inclusion - rural areas, targeting specific groups.
- Infrastructure and space - exhibition spaces, studios.
- Funding and stability - support funding bids, identify new funding streams.
- Evaluation and impact.
- Community led initiatives.

Health and Wellbeing

We asked participants how we could use the arts to improve and support health and wellbeing in the district.

- Improve health and wellbeing - support mental & physical health, reduce isolation.
- Promote lifelong learning - develop skills and inspire curiosity at all stages of life.
- Inclusive events and activities - safe spaces.
- Expand access - hard to reach communities.
- Innovation through digital.
- Mental health and wellbeing initiatives - adult play.
- Nature and environment.
- Social connection and inclusion.
- Targeted support.
- Measurable impact.

How can the arts strategy support our local arts organisations?

Strategic Collaboration & Partnerships

- Enable small organisations to participate in larger, multi-partner projects for greater reach and impact.
- Foster cross-district collaboration with partners.
- Drive joint funding bids for ambitious projects and programmes.
- Bring together high-profile partners (national/international) with local and emerging talent to create visibility and community pride.
- Build a strong partnership network with shared criteria, values.

Funding & Financial Support

- Provide professional guidance for funding applications and financial planning.
- Offer flexible grant schemes tailored to different organisation sizes.
- Develop clear pathways to funding, including regional frameworks such as Arts Council support.
- Support joint bids and explore development-linked funding opportunities.

Practical Resources & Infrastructure

- Create a central database and creative hub for organisations, practitioners, and community groups.
- Share physical resources (e.g., marquees, kits, chairs, tables) to reduce costs.
- Develop a notice board for commissions, exhibitions, and opportunities.
- Provide marketing support and training to raise the profile of local arts.
- Encourage networking locally and internationally to share best practices.

Clarity & Accountability

- Define priority areas and places for arts investment.
- Ensure the strategy clearly supports delivery and activation, not just vision.
- Assign organisations/groups roles in governance for accountability.
- Offer time-saving resources (templates, guides) to simplify processes.
- Quantify impact and health outcomes to demonstrate value.

Capacity Building & Skills

- Provide business advice and training for sustainability.
- Support evaluation and impact measurement to strengthen future bids.
- Encourage community-led initiatives and co-creation with local groups.

How can the community benefit from the arts Strategy?

Strengthen Social Connections and Identity

- Foster a sense of belonging and pride in South Derbyshire, creating a district that residents “buzz about.”
- Bring different people together, promoting cohesion and shared cultural identity.
- Inspire communities through arts that unite, celebrate heritage, and give the district a distinctive character.

Improve Health and Wellbeing

- Reduce isolation and build connections through inclusive arts activities.
- Support mental health and emotional wellbeing, offering joy and stress relief.
- Provide benefits for those with lifelong health conditions and their carers, using arts as a therapeutic tool.

Expand Access and Inclusion

- Ensure better access to arts, with clear routes, visibility, and information about opportunities.
- Deliver community workshops that empower individuals to rediscover talents and “give themselves permission” to create.
- Promote inclusivity arts are for everyone, regardless of age, background, or ability.

Drive Economic and Educational Growth

- Boost the local economy through jobs, tourism, and increased income for freelance creatives.
- Create learning opportunities through visual arts and collaborative projects, improving skills and knowledge.
- Encourage a diverse range of participation, opening horizons and fostering innovation.



Public Consultation

To ensure our Arts and Culture Strategy reflects the needs and aspirations of South Derbyshire's communities, we engaged directly with local residents, artists, and organisations through a public survey. This consultation aimed to capture diverse perspectives on arts participation, accessibility and priorities for future development.

The survey explored key themes such as:

- Levels of involvement in the arts (as artists, participants, or organisations).
- Personal views on the meaning and impact of the arts.
- The role of arts in health and wellbeing.
- Awareness of local arts organisations and venues.
- Barriers to participation and ideas for improving access.
- Preferences for future events and creative opportunities.

By gathering this feedback, we have ensured that the strategy is shaped by the voices of those who live, work, and create in South Derbyshire. This collaborative approach strengthens our commitment to building an inclusive, vibrant arts culture that celebrates local talent and connects communities.

Swadlincote Woodlands Graffiti

Using art to transform spaces.

Art has the power to transform the community, creating unique places and spaces and turning the unsightly into inspiring art. The container on Swadlincote Woodlands was described as ugly and boring. Located near the main entrance of the woodlands, it was decided instead of painting the walls green the parks team took a more inspiring route and commissioned a local group, Graffwerks to transform the container with the aim to create a feature and talking point. The design commissioned reflected the wildlife and habitat in the woodland.

The work demonstrates that art can add colour and a talking point to dull or neglected areas of the community. In doing this we can create a sense of pride and ownership among the community and improve the overall quality of life for those in the area or visiting. Transforming spaces with art we have the opportunity to showcase the culture and values of the community.
in commissioning artists we are also supporting, promoting their work whilst building the local economy.

As a result of this piece more murals have been commissioned around the area.







Festival of Leisure

The Festival of Leisure is South Derbyshire's flagship event, attracting over 10,000 attendees annually. As a free and fully accessible festival we are demonstrating our commitment to making arts and culture available to all.

This event provides a unique platform for creative participation, offering craft workshops, live music, and theatre performances that bring the arts directly to local people and visitors. In 2025, the festival partnered with leading local organisations People Express, Derbyshire Makes, and Melbourne Arts to deliver hands-on workshops in crafts such as weaving, clay throwing, and metal art. These activities, often inaccessible in everyday settings, gave residents the chance to explore new skills and creative practices.

The festival also advocates local music and emerging talent. The introduction of a grassroots stage in 2025 created opportunities for young artists to perform, gain exposure, and develop their careers.

Beyond creativity, the Festival of Leisure delivers wider social and economic benefits. It fosters community cohesion, celebrates heritage and traditions and enhances health and wellbeing through art and cultural experiences. The event supports local artists, makers, charities, and businesses, driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities.

This case study demonstrates how arts and events can transform communities, aligning with our arts strategy priorities. Local festivals like the Festival of Leisure are not just celebrations; they are essential drivers of social connection, economic resilience and creating a vibrant sense of place.

Groove On

Groove On is a dementia-friendly music-making project developed by People Express and OPUS Music and supported by South Derbyshire Public Health Locality funding. The project offers year-long fortnightly, inclusive workshops for people living with dementia and their carers or families, using rhythm, song and shared music-making to support emotional wellbeing, gentle physical activity and social connection. Designed around the participants' love of music, Groove On creates a welcoming space where creativity supports people to age well and feel less isolated.



Across the sessions, participants are encouraged to suggest their favourite songs for the professional musicians to play 'live'. They move more, play instruments and engage vocally in ways that are accessible and joyful, supporting coordination, breathing and confidence. Carers also benefit from shared creative moments that strengthen relationships and provide respite, while participants build new social connections.



As Val, a Carer, describes in the project film, "the whole atmosphere is so relaxed and friendly, it's something we can look forward to because it's something we don't have to worry about, we can relax and meet people. Alan can be himself, he enjoys listening, and he can sing without thinking the words just flow. We do it together, we leave the session with no worries, it's all lifted" – capturing the immediate and meaningful impact of taking part.

Groove On demonstrates how high-quality, participatory arts practice can contribute directly to public health outcomes, including improved mental wellbeing, reduced loneliness and increased everyday physical activity. By working in partnership with health, voluntary and community organisations, the project leaves a lasting legacy of connection, confidence and creative engagement for people living with dementia and those who care for them.





Melbourne Arts Festival

The Melbourne Arts Festival is one of South Derbyshire's most significant arts events, showcasing a wide range of artistic talent and engaging thousands of residents and visitors each year. Featuring over 160 regional artists and attracting over 6,000 attendees annually, the festival plays a major role in strengthening the district's creative identity. The renowned Art & Architecture Trail offers visitors the opportunity to experience original artwork displayed across gardens, halls and homes, complemented by live music, food experiences and interactive workshops that encourage participation and discovery.

A core strength of the festival is its commitment to nurturing emerging talent. The Emerging Artist Award, recognises new artists through providing opportunities to exhibit, further develop their practice and bursaries. The initiative has support from local MP, with strong support from more experienced artists, families, college, businesses and the wider community. Several award recipients have since progressed into the Spaces to Create programme, demonstrating the festival's impact on artistic development.

The festival continues to evolve with new and innovative features. Recent additions include a retrospective exhibition of sculptures, paintings and sketches by Ronald Pope, laying the foundations for the forthcoming 2026 project Humanity, Nature & Creativity. This ongoing evolution, combined with its long-standing history since 2005, has cemented the Melbourne Arts Festival as a cherished and influential event that supports artists, engages communities and enriches South Derbyshire's arts and cultural landscape.

Outcomes

To ensure the Arts and Culture strategy is delivered, we will monitor progress through clear performance indicators and regular evaluation, measuring participation, accessibility, economic benefits, partnerships, and wellbeing outcomes. These are outlined below:

Participation and Engagement

Monitor the volume of arts and cultural events and festivals delivered, both council-led and delivered in partnership, and track attendance and participation levels across the programme.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Measure the proportion of events offered free or at low cost, alongside the geographic spread of activity across rural and urban areas, to ensure fair and balanced access for communities across the district.

Partnership Development

Track the number of active partnerships with local, regional, and national organisations, including the volume of collaborative and supported projects and activities generated through these relationships.

Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Record the delivery of arts programmes designed to support wellbeing, including mental health initiatives and projects aimed at improving community wellbeing.

Economic Impact

Assess the support provided to local artists and creative businesses through engagement and partnership activity, measuring impact through partnership outputs, artist and business participation, and visitor numbers associated with cultural events.

Evaluation and Reporting

Produce an annual report summarising arts and cultural activity, assessing performance against strategic priorities, and highlighting key achievements and areas for development.



Vision

The South Derbyshire Arts and culture strategy sets out a clear vision for embedding creativity at the heart of community life. By focusing on unique places and spaces, inspiring arts for all, growth through partnerships, and health and wellbeing, this strategy provides a roadmap for cultural development that is inclusive, sustainable, and impactful.

Through collaboration with local artists, organisations, and residents, we aim to create opportunities that celebrate heritage, nurture talent, and foster innovation. Arts and culture will not only enrich lives but also drive economic growth, strengthen social connections, and improve health and wellbeing outcomes across the district.

This strategy is a commitment to building a vibrant, resilient South Derbyshire where creativity thrives and communities feel proud, connected, and inspired. By working together with key partners and the community we will ensure that arts and events remain accessible to all and continue to shape a district that is a great place to live, work, and visit.



Partners

Thank you to our partners for their contributions and support in the development and implementation of the Arts and Culture Strategy.















