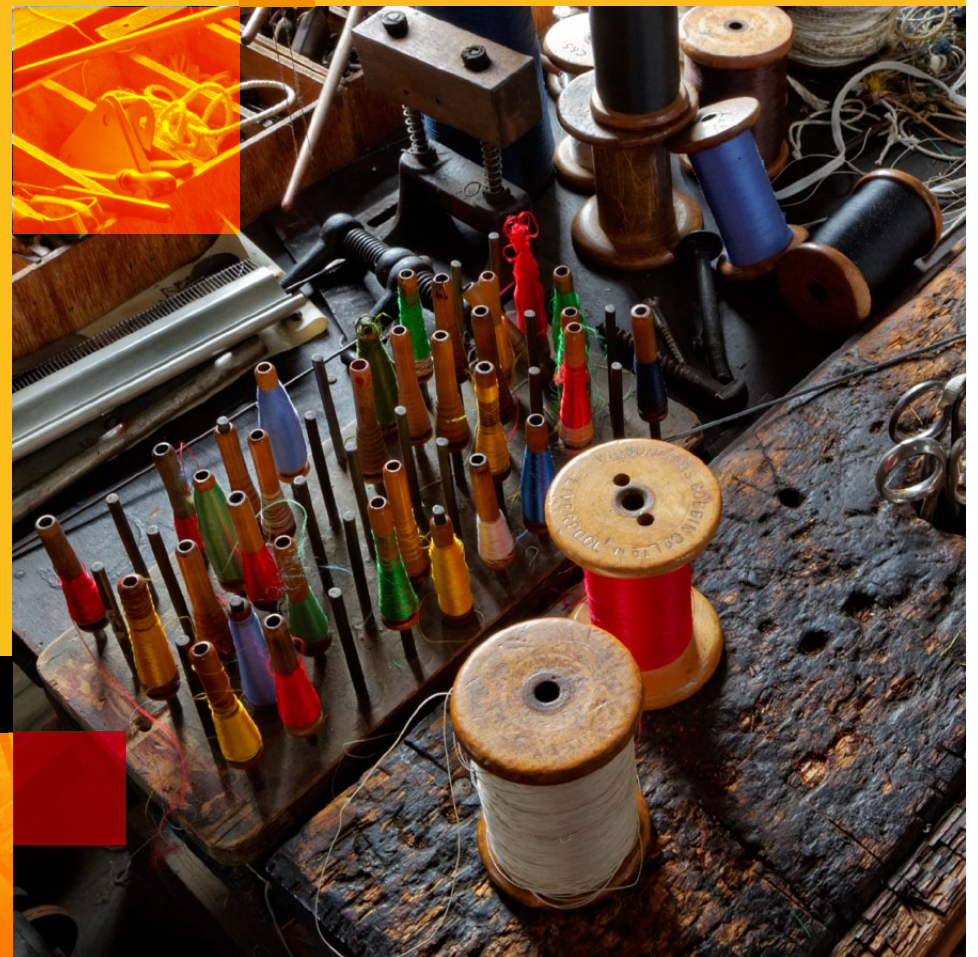


Macclesfield Heritage and Culture Strategy

Executive Summary

November 2014



Introduction:

Macclesfield has a rich heritage, from the medieval period through the Industrial Revolution to the more contemporary. Its more obvious cultural assets include a rich collection of historic buildings and it has a strong history of tolerance, innovation, industry and artistic endeavor. Macclesfield is a gateway to the Peak District and its proximity to the conurbations of Greater Manchester and the Potteries are also important in terms of its social and economic development. In recent times the town has undergone many changes and it continues to evolve.

The Heritage & Culture Strategy for Macclesfield Town Centre seeks to identify key cultural and heritage strands, including arts, music, creative industries and past history that will help take the Macclesfield story forward. The 'story' of Macclesfield highlights both the heritage and contemporary strands that make the town what it is today and that have become important to both its fabric and its future: Philanthropy, Industry and Technology, Art and Design, Built Heritage, Social History, Creativity, and of course, Silk.

This strategy recognises the historic role of Macclesfield as the centre of the British silk industry. This is a unique strand to the story of the town that should be told in a coherent and engaging way, ensuring Macclesfield is recognised as key destination on Western end of the globe spanning Silk Road.

There are other key strands to the story of Macclesfield, which will raise the profile of the town as a visitor destination, such as the history of creativity through its music with the legacy of Joy Division and the legendary Ian Curtis, and the current vibrant cultural programme of festivals and events throughout the year, with ever increasing ambitions to raise the creative bar.

This strategy understands how Heritage and Culture can enrich our lives and can impact on achieving wider objectives such as economic wellbeing, health and education. This includes the influence of the arts or events in animating a place and of heritage in providing a narrative root for individuals and places. There is also an economic impact of heritage and culture in areas such as skills, employment, brand image and the direct value of the visitor economy.



The heritage and culture of a place help it to stand out from the crowd. They become reasons why people choose to live in or associate with a place. They provide a measure of difference that mark a place out as vibrant, interesting and creative. They inform investment and location decisions or reasons to stay, developing a sense of belonging and pride. Heritage and culture are also important to visitors, giving reasons to come, reasons to stay and reasons to spend money. In that context the strategy aims to support regeneration and investment, helping to retain local talent, providing economic and cultural prosperity and promoting Macclesfield as a great place to live, visit, and work.

The strategy expresses the vision for Macclesfield's cultural landscape to 2024, providing an outline plan to achieve the vision, with resource estimates and timescales identified where possible. It was developed by consulting with the key organisations and people needed to realise the cultural vision for Macclesfield and assist in its delivery.

Context:

The Heritage & Culture Strategy was written within the context of the Macclesfield Town Centre Vision, a document shared by Cheshire East Council and 'Make it Macclesfield' (MiM). The culture and heritage strategy is a key element of the vision.

The strategy contributes to delivering key objectives in Local Development Plans, Tourism Development Plans and Community Arts Development plans as well as Cheshire East Council's strategic outcomes. These plans are summarised in Section 3 of the Strategy.

The Heritage & Culture Strategy provides the following opportunities to contribute and lead on delivering some of the objectives and strategic outcomes of the Town Centre Vision:

- Increase the appeal for retail, leisure and independent business to come to Macclesfield by providing a culturally vibrant town, creating a vitality at its centre.
- Improving the urban fabric around the town centre, through visible and prominent heritage and cultural assets and activities building on the town's positive image and providing a quality public realm scheme reflecting the 'story' of Macclesfield.
- Heritage buildings are well used, housing activities that support the sustainability of the building and promote the vision for Macclesfield.



Our aim is to enable the coordination and support of the heritage and cultural activities of Macclesfield so that they contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of residents and visitors, based on its built environment, historical social legacy and current cultural vibrancy.

The strategy will achieve this aim by leading, supporting or delivering the following:

- Culture and heritage synthesis with business.
- Maximising the use of heritage buildings.
- Changing perceptions, both within Macclesfield and with potential visitors.
- Sustaining and nurturing the organic growth of cultural and heritage development in the town centre.
- Developing a quality heritage and culture programme for the town's residents and visitors.
- Story Telling - Develop our audiences by telling the unique 'story' of Macclesfield through effective and coherent marketing and exciting and engaging interpretation. Projects and events delivered through the strategy should help tell the 'story' of Macclesfield.
- Access - Widening access to culture and heritage. Through accessible programming with outreach and community engagement, and/or offering 'a different slant' on the culture and heritage experience to increase engagement.
- Partnerships - Creating partnerships, locally, regionally and nationally to support the development and understanding of our offer and increase resources, develop skills and to learn from each other. Projects and events delivered through the strategy should seek to develop these partnerships where appropriate.
- Best Practice - Ensuring best practice is adhered to where possible in terms of culture and heritage programming, commissioning, community engagement and working with volunteers.
- Visual/Environment - The heritage and culture of Macclesfield should be visible and help contribute towards creating welcoming and quality surroundings that improves visitors' experiences, creating an environment that the community is proud of.
- Sustainability - Heritage and culture activities and projects, whether they are event based or building/collection based, should include robust plans around sustainability in terms of funding, resources, staffing and commitments to assets and their maintenance.



The Story:

It has been identified during the consultation process that the strategy should identify the 'story' of Macclesfield in terms of Heritage and Culture and how we want to tell that 'story' in the words of the Heritage and Culture community of Macclesfield. The purpose of the 'story' is to provide clear direction and to engage people in the culture and heritage of Macclesfield.

The 'story' is a unique tale - highlighting what is interesting to attract an audience and to help with identifying funding opportunities and alignment with local and national events and their heritage/cultural significance.

The 'story' has three themes and each of those themes connects and interlinks with one another. Here is a summary of each element of the 'story';



Silk

Perhaps the most obvious and important part of the 'story' in terms of heritage, but with some contemporary strands:

Philanthropy - interpreting and celebrating the heritage (Brocklehursts, West Park, Charles Roe etc.) and exploring the future potential for sponsorship/philanthropy to sustain and grow culture and heritage in Macclesfield.

Industry and Technology - interpreting the heritage and developing the use of current digital technologies for interpretation, education and access to culture and heritage in Macclesfield.

Art and Design - interpreting the heritage (Arts and Design School, patterns etc.) and plans to support/link with new designers/artists.

Heritage Buildings - interpreting and conserving the heritage of the buildings and their uses, with a plans to develop new uses.

Social History and Education - interpreting and celebrating the strong heritage of education (Useful Knowledge Society, Art and Design etc.) and identifying links into contemporary education.

Macclesfield Museums - interpreting the heritage through the museum sites and their development of programmes supporting contemporary design/technology/incubation.

National Silk Centre, Silk Quarter and Public Realm - Telling the story of silk through this development and providing links into retail and fashion. Exploring the potential of the Silk Road and international links.



Creativity

A major part of the current story, providing a vitality in the town through a programme of events, festivals and exhibitions, with future plans to incorporate new permanent facilities in Macclesfield;

Macclesfield Museums - linking from the Silk theme, with current programming of contemporary art and heritage links with patterns and Art and Design School.

Arts - connecting again with the Silk theme with many heritage building providing spaces as venues and potential for future studio/incubation spaces. Festivals, markets, arts organisations and private galleries creating an annual programme and permanent exhibitions that animate spaces, improve perception/attract visitors and provide links into the community.

Music - interpreting and promoting the musical heritage of Macclesfield and supporting the current music scene, and the development of new talent in the town. Increasing access to music and audience development.

Creative/digital industries - provide a link to the Entrepreneurship/Industry theme with potential to develop a digital community and support links to the heritage and culture sector to improve interpretation, access and audience development.



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Entrepreneurship/ Industry

The story of entrepreneurship is major historical strand of Macclesfield, kick starting the silk industry. There is the potential to support and nurture and Digital/Creative sector in the town and support new business through incubation support:

Charles Roe - interpret the heritage from Charles Roe and his activities (Charles Roe House and Christ Church) and develop new uses for the heritage buildings connected to him. Connections to philanthropy in Silk theme.

Synthesis with Business - promote/support heritage and culture working with business. Improve accessibility to heritage and culture and develop audiences.

Public Buildings - interpret the heritage of those public buildings and explore their uses for heritage and culture use (Butter Market and Old Town Hall).

Independent Business/Markets - explore and promote how heritage and culture can work with independent businesses and the local markets to increase vibrancy of town, animate spaces and promote activities, whilst developing audiences and increasing access.

Creative/Digital Industries - linking from the Creativity strand of the story, a digital/creative community to be supported to innovate, attract employees, provide incubation spaces and opportunities to link with culture and heritage.



Leadership and Delivery:

Leadership and delivery of the strategy has been addressed during consultations. While this is a shared approach by the Council with 'Make it Macclesfield', involving a wider group of organisations and individuals, once adopted, the strategy will need leadership and direction. Cheshire East Council has agreed to lead the strategy for the first 3 years, with the support of a core delivery group (The Heritage and Culture Partnership) to guide strategy implementation and a wider consultative Heritage and Culture Forum. The lead role will be reviewed after three years and then annually thereafter.

Delivery of the Strategy will be supported practically on the ground by a coordinating team, with regular updates for local Elected Members, Portfolio Holders in Cheshire East Council and key stakeholders.

Research and Consultation:

The strategy contains research into current audiences for cultural activities in Macclesfield; and research into potential audiences for activities. Macclesfield has some unique opportunities to increase visitor numbers, through the development and telling of its own 'story' to identified targets related to increasing day and staying visitors from UK in 'cosmopolitan' and traditionalist groups.

There is the potential to develop visitor markets directly for Macclesfield's offer and in association with related offers of interest (e.g. city of Manchester, Quarry Bank, Tatton Park, Jodrell Bank and other Historic estate offers, Cheshire cultural offer, Peak district etc.). Accessing international markets is more difficult, but Macclesfield does have a potential to become part of itineraries in the region. It also has some potentially unique connections for emerging markets, particularly Chinese, with Macclesfield recognised on the United Nations World Tourism Organisation designated Silk Trail.

The strategy contains some research into possible sources of funding to realise the aspirations of residents for a vibrant built and social environment. It highlights the need to provide a framework to foster sponsorship and philanthropy; and the need for joint marketing and information collection to demonstrate the benefits of investment in cultural and heritage activities.

The heritage buildings and cultural and heritage activity of Macclesfield are mapped. Individual buildings are historically significant but their impact is increased because of their number and proximity to each other. It is recognised that additional activities and buildings will emerge during the delivery of the strategy.



The Action Plan outlines short term (1-3 years) and longer term actions up to 2024.

The key actions are:

- Establishing a Partnership Group to champion and oversee delivery of the Strategy, initially led and supported by Cheshire East Council. The Partnership will provide opportunities for engagement at a whole range of levels in order to accommodate the different capacities, resources, time and availability that different individuals have.
- Facilitating the identification of potential partnerships and collaborations that would help realise funding opportunities.
- Establishing and publicising a sustainable annual programme of events and activities that will increase footfall through the town. Providing a programme that animates spaces and provides activity throughout the year.
- Developing and delivering a marketing strategy, which includes prominent interventions such as notice boards and visual/ambient marketing on approaches into the town, heritage interpretation and quality public art.
- Work with Economic Regeneration/ Inward Investment teams to provide support to attract and develop creative industries.

- Identification of existing skills and resources to help deliver the programme and identification of skills gaps.
- Creating/developing a communication platform with the Partnership Group for information sharing between organisations/ projects.
- A risk register is also included, which will be reviewed and updated annually by the Partnership Group.
- The Partnership Group will evaluate the success of the strategy. This will be the subject of meetings with the wider consultative group.

Development of projects and delivery of the action plan will be assessed against how they support delivery of the strategy and its aims and objectives.





Written and developed for Cheshire East council
and Make it Macclesfield by The Hamilton Project

