

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Chester Heritage and Visual Arts Strategy

July 2016

Revised January 2017

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Executive Summary

Cheshire West and Chester has developed this strategy to shape the future direction of the Heritage and Visual Arts in Chester. Cheshire West and Chester and consultant partners Amion and Morris Hargreaves McIntyre have analysed the key sources of primary data, consulted stakeholders and the community and used the feedback to help shape the strategic priorities. Using primary data to understand the audience segmentation and steer the priorities and investment on a city wide basis is a unique approach that will enable clear and focussed decision making.

The strategy is a turning point for delivery in the City and will pave the way for clear strategic thinking, better collaboration and more investment in the city's Heritage and Visual Arts. Chester has the social capital, physical collections, heritage and vision to deliver a bespoke, innovative and commercial offer to rival any other heritage city.

The vision has been developed in consultation with stakeholders in the city as no one body can deliver the aspirations. Not all aspects of the strategy will be a priority for all partners, but all stakeholders have a contribution to make to the vision and by working together we have a greater likelihood of delivering the transformation.

The focus is Chester city but projects, programmes and development will include surrounding communities.

What the Strategy Isn't

This is not a conservation heritage strategy, it is about understanding our audiences, engaging residents, working to attract more people to the city and improving the heritage and visual arts attractions and offer in the city. It is to support CW&C and partners when applying for funding from the HLF, ACE and other Strategic funders for the delivery of projects.

The Vision and Strategic Priorities

The City Is The Stage – We Will Act On It

We will use its stories, traditions and visual arts to inspire and engage the community and its visitors through bold creativity informed by the riches of archaeology, the built environment, archives, museum collections, parades and ideas.

1. We will build on the strength of the city's heritage stakeholders (especially the voluntary and community, public and private sectors, the University of Chester and the Cathedral) through co-ordination, facilitation and collaboration.
2. We will make more of our unique built heritage which is the city's greatest asset: 'the city as the stage':
 - (i) We will exploit the full potential of our key buildings and monuments and we will do more to interpret and animate the City to bring it to life;
 - (ii) We will enable everybody to see, use and enjoy it more by 'leading' people around it;
 - (iii) We will protect and maintain our buildings, monuments and stories for the future and we will integrate the protection and development of heritage into other plans (such as the evening economy, arts, transport etc.).
3. We will create a museum which properly and appropriately interprets the city's magnificent heritage for everyone.
4. We will support visual arts development across the City in consultation with key partners:
 - (i) We will develop the visual arts commissioning programme across the City building on the Lead Artist work.
 - (ii) We will undertake research with key partners to prioritise plans for visual arts and set clear ambition.
 - (iii) We will undertake feasibility to explore options to improve the infrastructure for the visual arts, incorporating visual arts venues and creative workspaces, working with partners including private sector, University of Chester and Chester Cathedral.
 - (iv) We will support the development of contemporary visual arts across the City in consultation with key partners and will set up a visual arts programming group that is forward looking, ambitious and pragmatic in co-ordinating shared objectives.
 - (v) We will work with key partners to support talent development; building in support for emerging artists within projects and identifying places and spaces for creating and exhibiting new work.

5. We will develop, promote and celebrate the city's unique heritage in parades and outdoor performance.
6. We will highlight and promote the city's heritage public realm to improve the city as a social space for everyone.
7. We will develop and invigorate the Archive creating new opportunities to engage with our social memory.

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Guiding Principles

A great deal of the feedback received about the draft strategy related to how heritage and visual arts projects, partnerships and programmes should be approached. The feedback highlighted what is important to people about heritage and visual arts and has led to the creation of a set of guiding principles to sit alongside the aims:

- **Authenticity** – Build on what is great about Chester, the real stories and gems. It is not about copying other places but celebrating what is special about Chester.
- **Community Engagement and Participation** – This should run throughout everything the Council and partners do. When developing projects, and in taking the action plan forward, meaningful engagement is a vital. We will creatively engage with our diverse communities connecting them to the stories of their city/local community; by encouraging connection, expression and ownership we will maximise the wider health benefits for our residents.
- **Youth engagement** – Engage with more and with a greater diversity of young people in heritage and visual arts. Consider the needs, passions and skills of young people when engaging them with heritage.
- **Valuing People** – It is important to value specialists (and their expertise) and to recognise the contribution of volunteers and the knowledge that exists in the community. The skills, knowledge, energy and ideas of curators, archivists, guides, teachers, artists, makers, conservationists and archaeologists are an asset to the City and there is potential for inspiring creative collaborations.
- **Valuing Places** – Recognise what makes the City special. The unique bone structure of the City and natural heritage tell the story of the City. This strategy sits alongside a suite of related documents and policies e.g. Heritage Masterplan and will aim to support and build on existing work.
- **Embracing/Making the most of technology** – Use of digital technologies should be a focus, considering how it can complement other interpretation and the arts.
- **Celebrating Creativity** – Encourage artists and entrepreneurs. Encourage them to creatively interpret and animate the City, provoking new ways of enjoying and appreciating its heritage and unique sites; exploring hidden and social spaces and encouraging people to appreciate the historic city.
- **Connecting People and Place** – Recognise the social role of heritage, the value of heritage to local residents and local identity and how heritage and arts can create pride in place.
- **Culture and Regeneration working together** - Ensure linkage and joint working between heritage/visual arts and regeneration to create projects that meet the aspirations from both perspectives.
- **Place shaping** – Use the heritage of an area to inform regeneration and cultural development. Recognise the historic character of Chester influences place making policies, strategies, projects and celebrations. Creative programmes, projects, responses and interpretation celebrate place.

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Chester's Heritage and Visual Arts Today

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1 Introduction

1.1 About this Heritage and Visual Arts Strategy

Chester is synonymous with a rich heritage and culture. Its development can be traced from the Roman era to the present day and it still retains some of the best Roman archaeology in the World. The unique recognisable Rows galleries are the envy of the world, the valuable assets of the River Dee and Shropshire Union Canal run right through the heart of the city, and it retains an internationally significant circuit of City Walls. Chester's surviving layers of built history makes it fascinating.

- Chester One City Plan 2012 -2027

Without doubt, Chester's heritage is outstanding. The evidence of over 2,000 years of history is visible in so many places and in so many ways: in its streetscape and its buildings; in the objects and materials within its collections and archives; in the experiences and opportunities which the city's residents and visitors can enjoy. Everybody, no matter what their relationship with the city, recognises the exceptional quality of this heritage and the important role it must play in the city's future as a thriving place to live, work and visit.

Alongside this, the scope for visual arts to renew our curiosity, highlight the charm of the city's past and contribute to its future is also understood. The high quality and innovative nature of the projects which have been developed and delivered in recent years are a strong starting point but, in the future, we aspire for the city to be recognised as a destination for high quality visual arts alongside its heritage.

This strategy, therefore, will do two things. Firstly, it will ensure that Chester's unique heritage is valued, respected, protected and exploited and will also deliver a step change in the city's visual arts, making sure that this unique heritage backdrop provides a creative setting for the visual and contemporary arts.

The primary focus of the strategy is the city centre, where the majority of the city's heritage and visual arts assets are located and will be developed. It is intended, however, that the benefits that it will deliver will be realised across the wider local authority area and that specific plans will be put in place at the next stage to ensure this.

Whilst the focus of this strategy is clear, it has been developed to complement a number of existing strategies which are helping to shape the strategic development of the city. In particular, this document will sit alongside the One City Plan, the Culture Strategy and 'A Guide to Thrive', the Council's plan for 2016 to 2020, guiding the delivery of these and other strategic plans in the critical areas of heritage and visual arts.

1.2 How this Strategy was developed

This strategy has been developed in four broad stages:

Stage 1 - information gathering, understanding, researching, listening and learning

Stage 2 – interpreting, drawing conclusions, testing ideas

Stage 3 – turning ideas into actions, assessing implications, testing again

Stage 4 – capturing the evidence, implications and proposed actions in a strategy



1.2.1 Stage 1 - information gathering, understanding, researching, listening and learning

The first stage focussed on gathering a comprehensive picture of Chester’s heritage and visual arts offer. There were a number of steps involved, under the three headings of Demand Analysis, Supply Analysis and Context Analysis.

(i) Demand Analysis

Primary research

Although evidence about Chester’s visitors has been gathered in the past, there has never been a comprehensive study which aims to understand how the wider population – those who have visited and those who haven’t – perceive it as a destination.

As an integral part of this strategy, a comprehensive primary research study was undertaken. Two thousand people living with a two and a half hour drive time of the city were asked a series of questions which tested their knowledge of, and perceptions about, the city. The Culture Segments tool was used to help to classify how different types of people respond to different aspects of the experience.

Desk research

This new data was overlaid by evidence drawn from a wide range of reports, surveys and documents which provided a broad understanding of the size, scale, characteristics and trends of the city’s visitors, residents and workers’ markets.

(ii) Supply Analysis

The supply analysis aimed to understand what the city's heritage and visual arts assets are, looking at both physical assets such as buildings and monuments and the stories and experience which tie these together.

This stage of the process was achieved through desk research and by consulting with a wide range of stakeholders who work or engage in different capacities in heritage and visual arts. The long-list of tangible and intangible assets was classified in different ways to understand how each was being used at present and where future opportunities might lie.

(iii) Context Analysis

All of the relevant national, regional and local strategies and policies were examined to understand how Chester's heritage and visual arts strategy would complement on, and deliver against, the wide range of strategic objectives at all levels.

Evidence was also gathered about how other destinations have been recognising the value of their heritage and visual arts in different ways.

1.2.2 Stage 2 – Findings and implications

This wide range of data and evidence was then gathered together and assessed and initial opportunities identified. This second stage of the process was largely qualitative and drew on the professional opinion and expertise of the client team, strategic partners, the wider stakeholder group and the consultant team. A series of workshops and meetings was used to assess and discuss the evidence and begin to formulate options for future action. A number of strategic themes were identified which grouped together the main priorities for development and future improvement.

1.2.3 Stage 3 - Development options

The third stage took the strategic themes and translated these into specific actions - the things which should be done to deliver on the city's heritage and visual arts potential.

Thought was given to how each action could be delivered, which organisation should take a lead and the timescale for delivery.

This was tested with the client team and a small number of key stakeholders.

1.2.4 Stage 4 – Strategy output

All of the work to date was captured in this document which is underpinned by two detailed technical papers. One covers the findings from the primary research and market (demand) analysis and the other provides the detailed findings from the supply analysis.

This draft document will be shared with the client team and key stakeholders before it is finalised and agreed as the strategic plan which is adopted by the city.

This report is divided into three sections.

The first section explains how Chester's heritage and visual arts will be developed in the future.

The second section explains why, by providing an assessment of Chester's heritage and visual arts today.

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Developing Chester's Heritage and Visual Arts

2 Aims and objectives

2.1 The Vision for Chester's Heritage and Visual Arts

The City Is The Stage – We Will Act On It

We will use its stories, traditions and visual arts to inspire and engage the community and its visitors through bold creativity informed by the riches of archaeology, the built environment, archives, museum collections, parades and ideas.

2.2 Strategic objectives

The vision statement will be delivered through seven strategic objectives:

1. We will build on the strength of the city's heritage stakeholders (especially the voluntary and community, public and private sectors, the University of Chester and the Cathedral) through co-ordination, facilitation and collaboration.
2. We will make more of our unique built heritage which is the city's greatest asset: 'the city as the stage':
 - (i) We will exploit the full potential of our key buildings and monuments and we will do more to interpret and animate the city to bring it to life;
 - (ii) We will enable everybody to see, use and enjoy it more by 'leading' people around it;
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 - (iii) We will undertake feasibility to explore options to improve the infrastructure for the visual arts, incorporating visual arts venues and creative workspaces, working with partners including private sector, University of Chester and Chester Cathedral.
 - (iv) We will support the development of contemporary visual arts across the City in consultation with key partners and will set up a visual arts programming group that is forward looking, ambitious and pragmatic in co-ordinating shared objectives.

- (v) We will work with key partners to support talent development; building in support for emerging artists within projects and identifying places and spaces for creating and exhibiting new work.
- 5. We will develop, promote and celebrate the city's unique heritage in parades and outdoor performance.
- 6. We will highlight and promote the city's heritage public realm to improve the city as a social space for everyone.
- 7. We will develop and invigorate the Archive creating new opportunities to engage with our social memory.

3 Future priorities

Building on a strong foundation there are a number of significant developments in heritage and the visual arts in Chester, which are already underway and which this strategy will build upon:

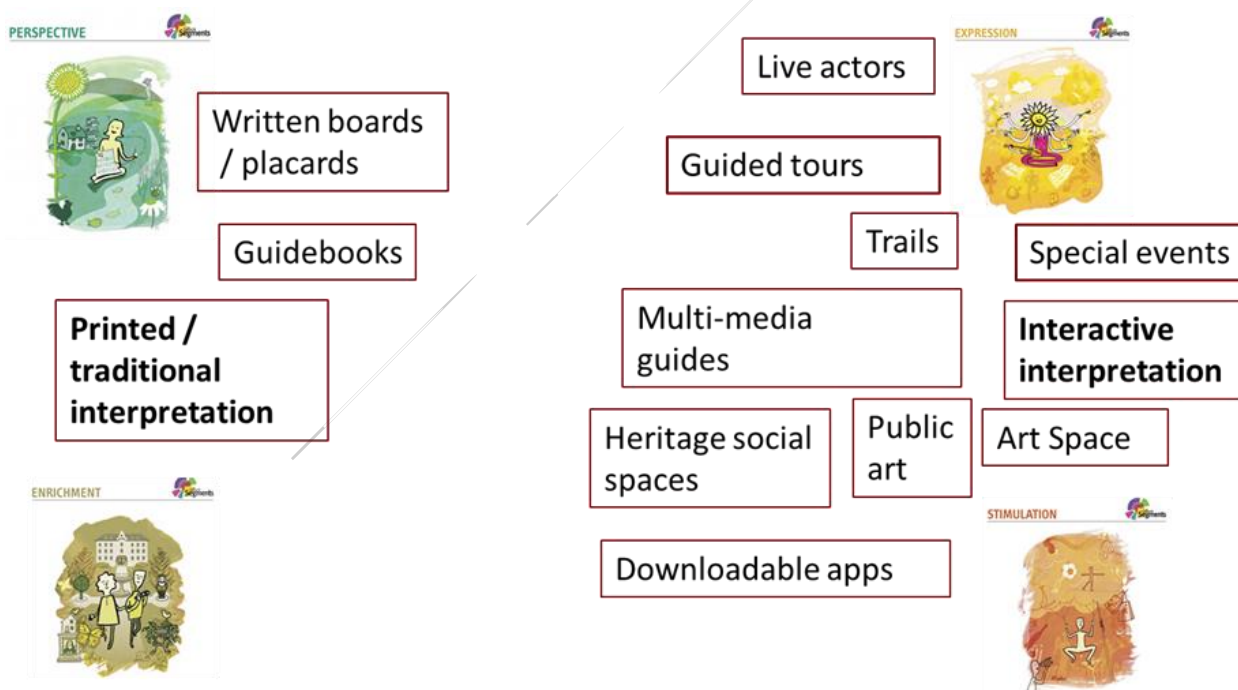
- One of the most powerful and distinctive aspects of Chester's heritage and visual arts is the energetic, passionate and diverse range of stakeholders who form part of the offer whether through heritage tours, events or creative programming. Community groups, voluntary sector organisations, small heritage businesses and other private sector partnerships such as Chester Business Improvement District (CH1 BID), Marketing Cheshire and the Chester Growth Partnership are already active in delivering or promoting Chester's heritage and arts. These stakeholders will be essential to the future delivery of this strategy and we will create a 'Chester Heritage' group to drive the heritage aims of this strategy forward.
- A Heritage and Interpretation Masterplan, produced five years ago, is being delivered and includes vitreous enamel panels interpreting the city's heritage sites, a smartphone app, accessible mapping, interpretive film, a guidebook, augmented reality binoculars and public art.
- The Lead Artist's project is underway beginning with the Float theme. Redesign and planting of the King Charles' Tower gardens have revealed more of the heritage features and the pedestrian route from the canal into the city is better defined. A signature artwork and other arts-related activities will follow. Chester University and Grosvenor Estates are both expressing interest in developing a contemporary visual arts space.
- Chester Cathedral is developing its offer and has been using trails and displays to increase visitor appeal. Cathedral at Heights is attracting a lot of attention and a Falconry Centre has recently been added in the cathedral gardens, whilst volunteer support has enabled the King Charles' Tower to be opened in 2016. Building on these initiatives, the Cathedral is in the early stages of working up a range of further proposals to improve its visitor experience and interpretive provision.
- There is a focus on the ongoing maintenance of the walls for their future sustainability. Water Tower and Bonewaldesthorpe Tower have been opened as visitor attractions, with funding support from the Wellcome Foundation. Work is also underway to pilot activity that improves access to the Castle Complex.
- The Roman, Civil War and Blue and Green Badge guides are all active in the city although there may be more opportunities for collaboration between them.
- The midsummer and midwinter watch and other parades are being produced with local schools and volunteers. Future joint projects are being discussed with opera and a cast of giant puppets. A City Passion was performed for the first time in Easter 2016, through collaboration between Chester Mystery Plays, Churches Together in Chester and Theatre in the Quarter. The Roman Tours soldiers were amongst the cast. The next production of the Mystery Plays is in 2018.
- Chester History and Heritage, in collaboration with Chester Civic Trust, delivers an increasingly successful series of Heritage Open Days every year, part of an initiative which

has taken place throughout England for over 20 years. In Chester it runs over four days. Specially produced trail leaflets are produced and there is a strong internet presence. A wide range of locations are now included, bringing opportunities for people to discover hidden gems and gain access to buildings which are not normally open to the public, as well as those which are. Participation and popularity with visitors is growing, complementary events are starting to take place and it is developing into a city-wide heritage festival.

- The Diocese of Chester has completed an outline review of the cities Anglican churches which are of particular historical and artistic interest. They identified their potential for increased access, versatility, better use of space, infrastructure, repair conservation work and visitor interpretation/welcome. St John’s Church is in the early stage of planning a major capital programme of conservation and public access and is already working on an exhibition of their Viking stones.

3.1 Meeting the needs of different audiences

In delivering the future objectives, a range of different interpretative methods will be used. The particular preferences and expectations of the core segments (Perspective, Expression, Enrichment and Stimulation), shown below, have been identified. The segments are relevant to both resident and visitor markets. More detailed description of these segments is given Section 4 of this strategy.



3.2 Actions & Implementation Timeframe

The following table summarises the twelve (xii) key actions and the timescales for how we are going to deliver on our seven strategic objectives. Further detail is provided in the Action Plan in section 3.

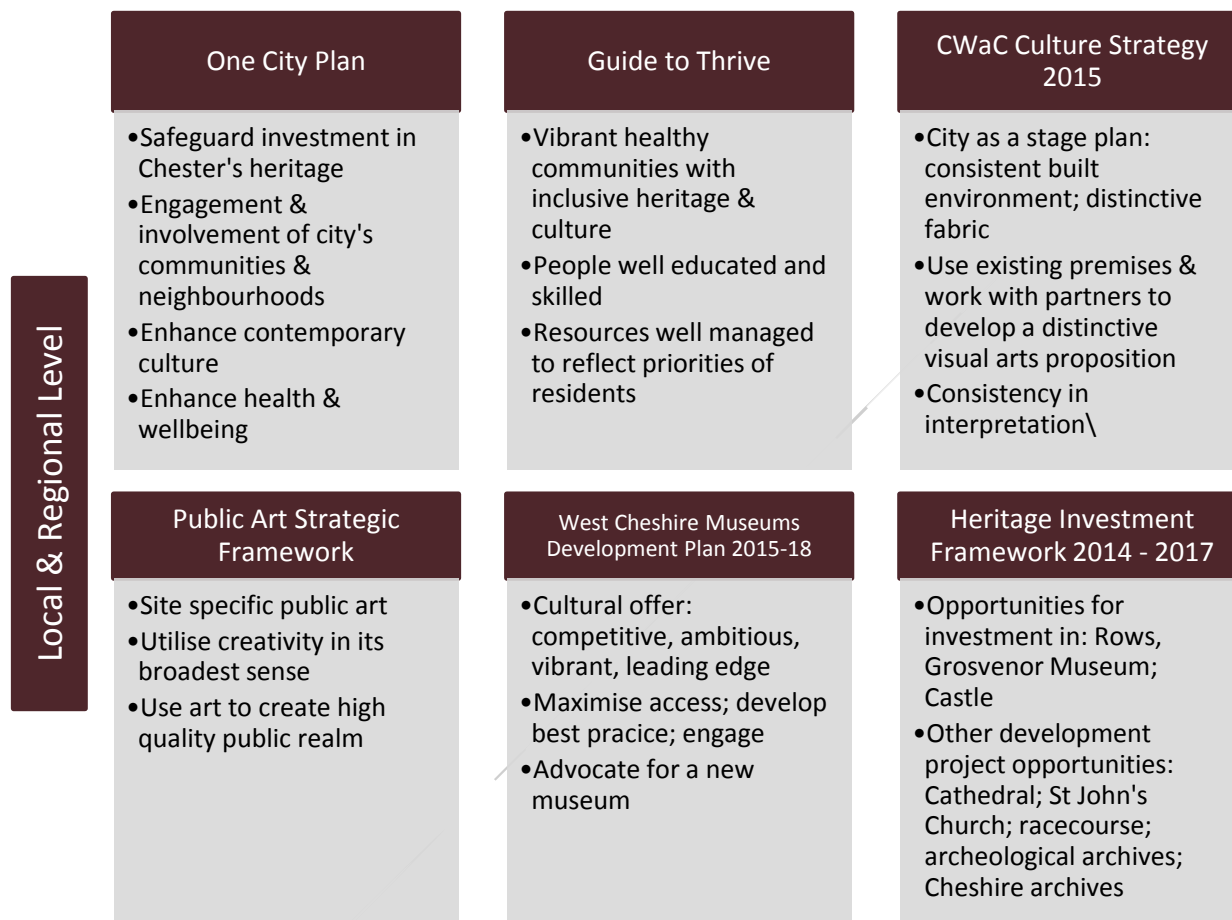
Lead organisation			Objective
Short term			
CWaC	i. Capitalise on the energies of the people working or following their interests in heritage		1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinate, enhance and support the work of stakeholders and partners. 		
CWaC	ii. Complete what's been started		2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver the Heritage Interpretation Masterplan Develop and expand the Chester Unlocked project. Integrate illuminated showcases within the Rows, building on the model that already exists. 		
CWaC	iii. Extend what works well		2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Heritage Open Day model by creating Chester's Heritage Festivals as an extended programme. 		
CWaC	ix. Increase range of public arts work building on Lead artist's work		4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement Lead Artist works around "Hide, Traverse, Scale and Float" 		
Medium term			
CWaC Chester diocese Civic Trust	iv. Increase and ease access to historic spaces		2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Chester Diocese on St Peter's and St John's churches. Improve physical access to the rows, repairs to steps and hand rails and floor treatments to improve access. Improve lighting in the rows 		
CWaC BID	v. Improve quality in historic environments		2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a programme with owners and tenants in historic areas to enhance historic environment Fit with Heritage Crime Initiative. 		
CWaC, University of Chester, Chester Civic Trust	vi. Create a Past, People, Places project (reduced scale in castle option)		2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Chester a centre of excellence for living history, costume creation and training in theatrical story telling Establish programme of community volunteering and training in collaboration with university, colleges and local craftsmen Create characters to populate the city with stories from different periods Use archives, museum objects and archaeological finds to inform scripting Create a visible coordination point, possibly on ground floor of Bishop Lloyd's Palace Learn, practice and promote artisan skills Create demonstration and display areas in vacant shops. Build on existing initiatives at St John's Church to expand living history fair 		
CWaC	vii. Develop an improved museum offer which does justice to Chester's significant		3

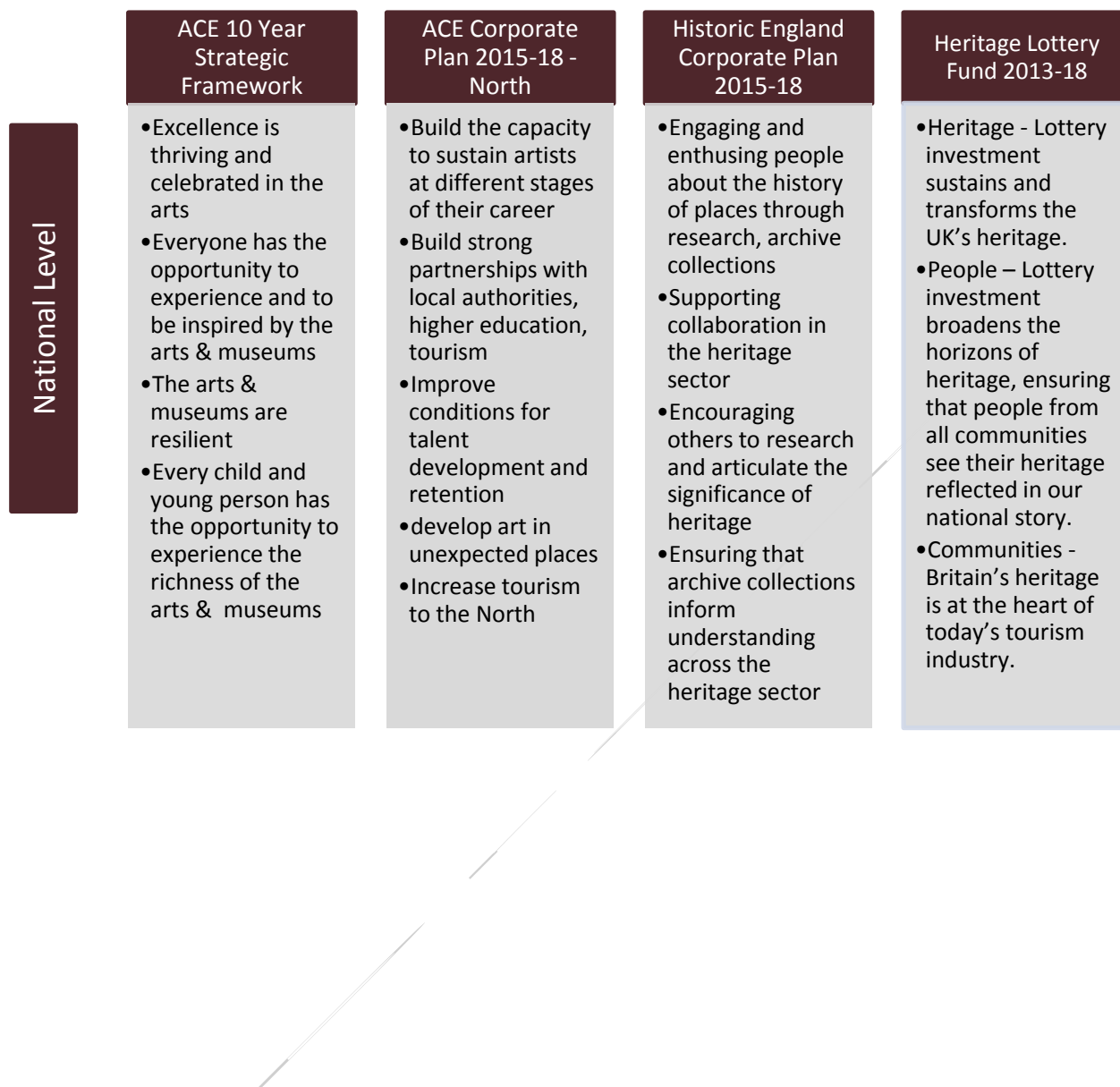
	<p>heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either in Chester Castle as part of a complex interrelated site with contemporary arts spaces or as a redeveloped museum on the existing site • Include a community based project to develop museum content within the existing museum • Short-term relocation of Chester History & Heritage and long-term incorporation into the new museum 		
CWaC, University of Chester	<p>viii. Create contemporary arts spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either in Chester Castle as part of a complex interrelated site with museum or in other available spaces in the city • Include facilities for uses of different media including digital arts • Include studio space for artists • Link into visual arts commissioning programme • Deliver high quality projects and exhibitions • Welcome touring exhibitions • Provide public engagement activities • Continue to develop links with the University based on the Creative Perceptions pilot programme 		4
CWAC Chester Mystery Plays Ltd Theatre in the Quarter	<p>x. Pull together and expand the range of community based parades and theatre to become greater than the sum of its parts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a formal collaboration between key players involved in community-based parades and productions • Provide co-ordinator role and marketing support • Create two more annual events in the city's calendar • Market these unique community-based events under one banner • Integrate the programme with living history activities • Enable viewing of and involvement in the creation of puppets and props, and store puppets and props for parades 		5
CWaC	<p>xii. Reveal Chester's rich history and heritage through its archive for the investigation, involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure new building with a welcoming, inspirational environment to provides access to collections and adequate space • Make major improvement in provision and use ICT to bring the collections closer to people • Reach more and a wider range of people through public activities onsite and in the community • Transform local provision in libraries and established local Heritage Hubs • Develop new and innovative partnerships • Increase and diversify funding to promote sustainability • Become recognised centre of excellence • Become a stronger, more visible, better recognised corporate resource for Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils 		7
Long term			
Chester Growth Partnership	<p>xi. Improve key sites in the One City Plan as heritage social spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop improvement plans for key historic social and meeting spaces • Co-ordinate through Chester Growth Partnership Board 		6



4 Strategic context

There are a number of important strategic policies at local, regional and national level which this strategy will help to deliver. The following summarises the most relevant strategic objectives. (A full description of the relevant strategies and priorities is included in the Technical appendix).





5 Chester's Visitors

5.1 Size of potential market

5.1.1 Resident Market

Chester has a large potential catchment market. Over 17 million people live within a two and a half hour drive time of the city.

The city currently attracts nearly 950,000 staying visits, of which 128,000 come from overseas. A significant percentage of the 817,000 domestic staying visitors live within two and a half hour drive time of the city.

Catchment area	Number of people
Resident Market	
Cheshire West & Chester residents	273,942
Up to 60 minute drive time (excluding CWaC residents)	4,430,047
60 to 90 minute drive time	5,756,020
90 to 150 minute drive time	3,476,742
Cumulative total	17,214,124
Staying visitors	
Overseas visitors	128,000
Domestic visitors (includes residents markets)	817,000
Cumulative total	945,000

5.2 Significant heritage and visual arts market in the North West

Taking Part¹ data shows that there is a significant and active, heritage-engaged market in the North West. 73% of adults in the region had visited a heritage city or site in the past 12 months. Although smaller, the active market for museums and galleries is still substantial, with 52% of adults in the North West having visited a museum or art gallery in the past 12 months.

5.3 Contemporary art audiences are younger and more diverse

The combined development of a visual arts offer alongside a coherent and refreshed heritage offer will serve both to increase the size of the potential visitor market for Chester and diversify the demographic profile of the visitor base as audiences for contemporary work are younger and more ethnically diverse than those for heritage.

¹ Taking Part is a national survey conducted by DCMS, Arts Council, Historic England and Sport England into many aspects of leisure, culture and sport.

5.4 Overseas tourism visits recovered in 2014 but not back to 2010 levels

Visits to Chester from overseas recovered in 2014 to 128,000 visits but this is still lower than the five year high of 137,000 achieved in 2010. Chester attracted a similar number of overseas visits in 2014 to Stratford-upon-Avon (144,000) but the number visiting for a holiday (as opposed to for business or visiting friends and relatives) was significantly lower than for Stratford (39,000 compared with 73,000 in Stratford).

5.5 Domestic overnight visitor numbers to the region are static

The trends for domestic (GB) overnight staying trips to Cheshire West and Cheshire, monitored through Visit Britain's Great Britain Tourist Survey (GBTS) show that the volume of holiday trips to the region remained static at 403,000 in the 2012-14 period based on a three-year average.

5.6 City centre footfall in Chester is Constant

Whilst day visitor numbers to the Cheshire West and Chester region continue to show year-on-year growth, city centre footfall trends and levels have remained consistent in Chester.

5.7 Segmentation will help Chester develop its heritage and visual arts offer

This strategy uses the Culture Segments system to profile the audiences for heritage and visual arts in Chester. Culture Segments is specific to the cultural sector and based on deep-seated cultural values and beliefs.

There are eight Culture Segments, detailed summaries of which can be found in the technical paper.

Since it is not realistic or achievable to aim to attract all eight segments, the following five segments emerged from the research as the most viable growth segments for Chester. The desires and expectations of these segments have been considered when developing the future action plan (in the second part of this strategy). The target segments are:

- Expression (core segment);
- Stimulation (core segment);
- Enrichment (core segment);
- Essence (secondary segment); and
- Perspective (secondary segment).

5.8 Chester's heritage market is big, but gallery attendance is not uncommon in the survey catchment area

Consistent with Taking Part, data from the primary research undertaken for this strategy (the population survey) showed that there is a significant market for heritage within two and a half hour drive time of Chester. More than two thirds (77%) of the adult population have engaged in the past year.

Engagement with visual arts is less common, with around a third (31%) having visited an art gallery in the past year. Again this is consistent with the findings from the Taking Part survey data.

Visitors tend to place high importance on historic sites and attractions when choosing a day out or overnight destination and place less importance on art galleries.

However, the Expression, Stimulation and Essence segments are significantly more likely than average to have engaged with both heritage and visual arts and are important market segments for Chester in the future.

5.9 There is room to improve Chester's reach as an overnight destination

Visitors from the North West most commonly make day visits to Chester. However, as drive-time distance from the city increases:

- propensity to visit for a day trip declines significantly;
- propensity to visit for an overnight stay remains the same; and
- the proportion of non-visitors' increases.

This suggests there is potential to grow the number of overnight trips by convincing those that think they live too far for a day visit that Chester is an attractive weekend or overnight destination. The survey responses suggest that current visitors believe there is plenty to keep them occupied in Chester for a weekend.

5.10 Visitors expect heritage and culture from Chester

The survey responses indicate two thirds (64%) of visits to Chester include at least one aspect of the heritage or cultural offer. Individual heritage attractions are rarely the 'main driver' of visits, but there are a range of venues and sites that people build into their day when they visit.

Those who have not visited also expect to 'do' culture and heritage in Chester and cite all the usual attractions – the Rows, Walls and Cathedral – but also cite museums and art galleries as experiences they would look out for.

Survey data also shows that, although most visits are socially motivated – i.e. people visit for a 'nice day out' with friends and family, a significant proportion expect a deeper intellectual or emotional experience; the chance to see history where it happened or to see beautiful things in an attractive setting.

5.11 People need a reason to visit and return

A lack of awareness of exactly what Chester offers is a more significant deterrent than negative perceptions of the city. Over one third (35%) of 'rejectors' (those who had never visited Chester and were not interested in doing so in the future) cited a lack of knowledge of the different things to see and do as their main barrier to attendance. Previous visitors are often reluctant to return because they feel they have 'been there and done that'.

5.12 Heritage in Chester has a limited national profile

A quarter (25%) of those within the total catchment area positioned Chester in their top three destinations, based on its history and heritage offer – placing it alongside Bath (24%) and Liverpool (23%), but significantly lower than York (66%) and Edinburgh (57%). However, the proportion of respondents that placed Chester in their top three declines with distance and fell to 17% among those living 120 to 150 minutes away.

Looking at individual venues, Chester Zoo was the only site with what we might consider a national profile. There is a group of four other sites (Racecourse, City Walls, Cathedral and River Dee) with 50%+ awareness that sit alongside Chester Zoo in a 'top tier' of heritage venues, but the majority fall into a 'second' or 'third' tier with awareness ranging from 1% to 30% in the catchment area.

5.13 Tell engaging stories, rather than focusing on a given era

Survey data suggests that, when labelled as such, certain eras have more immediate appeal than others. Roman and Medieval periods were better received than Georgian and 20th Century, for example, although the differences were fairly small.

The general trend is as follows: the more culturally active audiences tend to be more interested in history of all types; the less active audiences are less interested in history of all types. Chester should focus on telling engaging stories rather than focusing on a given era.

5.14 Prioritising the needs of the Stimulation and Expression segments

Expression and Stimulation are the two most significant growth segments for Chester's heritage and visual arts. Both of these segments feature prominently in the market for heritage and visual arts and both report high levels of interest in a future visit to Chester.

5.14.1 Expression

Expression appreciates heritage sites that are brought to life. For them, the arts and culture are inherently social – something you actively experience with others.

Words which best describe Expression are:

Receptive, Confident, Community, Expressive

They are in-tune with their creative and spiritual side. They are often arty, confident, fun-loving, self-aware people with a wide range of interests, from culture and learning, to community and nature.

5.14.2 *Stimulation*

Stimulation tend to prefer contemporary art forms, so heritage and visual arts will need to be quirky and unconventional in order to appeal to them.

Words which best describe Stimulation are:

Active, Experimental, Discovery, Contemporary

They live their lives to the full, looking for new challenges and to break from the crowd. They are open to a wide range of experiences, but like to be at the cutting edge.

5.14.3 *Essence*

The Essence segment will also be important as Chester develops its visual arts offer, although it will be important that the experience which is developed avoids 'exclusivity'.

The highly culturally active Essence segment is significantly over-represented in the regional visual arts market. This segment will be particularly important for the visual arts offer, but efforts to target them should not be made at the expense of presenting an offer that is inclusive and accessible.

Words which best describe Essence:

Discerning, Spontaneous, Independent, Sophisticated

They tend to be well-educated, highly active cultural consumers and creators. They are confident in their own tastes and pay little attention to what others think.

5.15 Engaging with traditional heritage audience segments: Enrichment and Perspective

The strategy must also address the needs and expectations of traditional heritage audiences which include Enrichment and Perspective, alongside those of the more culturally adventurous Expression and Stimulation.

Enrichment and Perspective are over-represented in the lapsed audience for Chester. They are less active than the other core segments and more risk averse, Perspective in particular. They will be less likely to visit if the experience provided by Chester is too far removed from what they would consider a typical heritage day out.

Words which best describe Enrichment:

Mature, Traditional, Heritage, Nostalgia

Enrichment like spending their leisure time close to home. They have established tastes. They enjoy culture that links to beauty, history, nature, heritage and traditional art forms.

Words which best describe Perspective

Settled, Self-sufficient, Focused, Contented

Perspective is fulfilled and home-orientated. Their spontaneous nature and appetite for discovery drive their engagement. They usually have a small number of deep interests that they look to exercise through their days out.



6 Chester's heritage and visual arts assets

6.1 The significance of Chester's built heritage

Chester has many significant historic buildings and monuments which have been built, adapted and rebuilt over the course of the last 2,000 years. As different periods brought new economic and social needs and as different construction styles and materials were available, buildings of different styles were constructed next to, and on top of, older ones. As a result, the city today has a very rich mix of built heritage which tells its story eloquently and creates an environment which is full of vivid backdrops and contrasting experiences. Of particular note:

- the City Wall was first constructed by the Romans but was rebuilt, fortified and redesigned over many periods including Victorian additions with the Eastgate clock;
- Chester Rows are a unique medieval construction, following the street pattern established by the Romans, with nothing comparable in all of Europe;
- Chester's importance as a base for Edward I's conquest of Wales and as an ecclesiastical centre brought the most skilled builders and craftsmen in the country to the city;
- the establishment of powerful guilds during the middle ages to protect the interests of merchants produced long-lasting symbols and traditions which are still alive today;
- Chester was an important centre and one of the last Royalists strongholds in the Civil War;
- before the establishment of Liverpool, Chester was the biggest port in the region;
- the development of the cotton industry in Lancashire shifted the balance of trade and industry but Chester continued as a regional centre for markets, fairs and commerce;
- Chester was a fashionable place to live during the Georgian period. Many new houses were built and some properties were enlarged and overlaid with classical façades; and
- In the Victorian and Edwardian periods many buildings were either constructed or refaced with black and white half-timbering by architects such as John Douglas, who worked for the Grosvenor estate.

6.2 Collections and archives

6.2.1 *The Grosvenor Museum*

The Grosvenor Museum was founded by learned societies in the mid-19th century and the building was constructed to house their collections to provide an art gallery and accommodate a school of science and arts. This is reflected in the nature of some of museum's collections.

The museum today has very strong archaeological collections, particularly for the Roman period. These include material around the military fortress, the legions and everyday life. There is also an internationally important collection of Roman tombstones. The extensive natural

history collections, which were established by Victorian naturalists, include geological material. There is a large silver collection, also of international importance from both a decorative arts perspective and in relation to Chester's importance as an assaying office in the region. It includes Chester hallmarked objects from over four hundred years, Chester race trophies, church silver and plate and pieces from the celebrated Marquis of Ormonde collection.

The museum's collection of paintings covers five centuries and includes work by regional artists, art which has been collected locally, and pictures of people and places in the area. The watercolours, drawings and prints present a comprehensive record of Chester and Cheshire's architectural heritage, including Victorian watercolours by Louise Rayner, plus strong collections of historic and modern prints. The fine art displays are complemented by sculpture and furniture, and there are regular loans from the Duke of Westminster's private collection.

There is a wide range of social history material including a good collection of costume and accessories, which is notable in its own right, domestic, work and personal items and ephemera. Part of these are currently presented through a series of period room sets which include a Stuart dining room, Georgian drawing room, Victorian entrance hall, kitchen, parlour, bedroom and school room; an Edwardian bathroom and 1920's nursery.

Some smaller previously unseen museum objects are being displayed in Chester shops, where they relate to the goods on sale, as part of the Chester Unlocked project. This is a joint initiative linked to a trail and a quiz and has been developed with the CH1 Chester Business Improvement District (Chester BID) and Big Heritage (a social enterprise working with archaeology and community based learning delivery).

6.2.2 The Cheshire Archive and Local Studies Service

Cheshire Archive and Local Studies Service, currently based in the Cheshire Record Office in Chester, is a shared service. It manages archives for both Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils. The service is exploring relocation arising from a need for more space for the many thousands of records held and to create an archive that meets modern standards for the storage and long term preservation of archives and making them more accessible. The ambition to secure new premises has been the subject of consultation and review and locations other than Chester have been considered. The move will enable: better preservation and management of the unique and irreplaceable collections, better access for more people, an audience development programme, more community engagement and digital access.

The service holds historical records and a local studies collection relating to both the ancient and modern county of Cheshire, the Diocese and the city of Chester. Some material dates back as far as the 12th century. There is a wealth of material about life in the city of Chester. The resources available include: books and pamphlets, maps and plans, trade directories, local newspapers, periodicals and magazines, photographs and illustrations. There are also parish records from the 16th century onwards, wills and probate records, poor law and workhouse records, diocesan records, records relating to Chester Cathedral, electoral registers, estate records and documents from solicitors, societies, businesses, hospitals, schools and courts. Much of this enables the lives of people who owned, worked or lived in the many historic buildings in the city to be literally pieced together.

Improved access to a new Record office and through an enhanced outreach programme across the Borough will provide opportunities to integrate the work of the Archives through interpretation and telling the stories that will bring Chester's heritage to life.

6.2.3 *The Historic Environment Team*

The Historic Environment Team is responsible for heritage asset management in Chester. The team has many years' experience in managing and interpreting the urban archaeological resource, including the visible monuments, buried remains, finds and archives. It advises on flagship heritage assets such as the Chester City Walls and Towers and the amphitheatre and supports the management of programmes of conservation and repair and supervising archaeological excavation. The team are involved in interpreting the heritage landscape of the city, as well as providing a range of site information and public and community access services. The team assists with the delivery of the University of Chester Archaeology Course. Students from the course undertake managed archaeological excavations in Grosvenor Park.

The Historic Environment Team has recently submitted a Heritage Grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to create an Accessible Archives project called "Outside the Box". This is concerned with the interpretation of 25 years of documentation and finds from archaeological digs including significant investigation of the amphitheatre. The project will make these archaeological archives much more accessible to a wider range of people. After completion of the project, they will be transferred to the Grosvenor Museum, which will ensure a sustainable future for the finds and the information that the archaeology has revealed.

6.3 Digital presence

A number of discreet projects related to the medieval heritage of Chester and the Rows have recently taken place and have traditional and digital outputs. The Mapping Medieval Chester project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in 2008 and brought together scholars working in the disciplines of literary studies, geography, archaeology and history. The focus of the project was the identities of Chester inhabitants between 1200 and 1500. (<http://www.medievalchester.ac.uk>).

Discover Medieval Chester is now represented by a website with maps, self-guided tours, animations and children's games. The project provided a temporary exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum in 2013 and talks and events took place around other events such as the Chester Literature Festival. The project also contributed to the projected artwork at St John's Church. (<http://discover.medievalchester.ac.uk>).

The Chester Unlocked Project is being delivered by Chester BID and Big Heritage. This has a strong digital presence and promotes Hoot's Route and the Deva Codex trails. (<http://www.chesterunlocked.com>).

6.4 Heritage attractions

6.4.1 *Chester Cathedral*

Chester Cathedral is a popular tourist attraction and entry is free although a donation is requested. As well as experiencing the historic architecture or attending a service, visitors can now pay to have a guided tour of high level walkways and the cathedral tower, which offers a view of the city and the surrounding area. There is a programme of performances and events throughout the year with a variety of themes including drama, music, arts and literature. There is a large café and a shop and a Falconry Centre has recently opened in the cathedral grounds. This year, cathedral volunteers are opening up the King Charles' Tower which sits on the City walls near the cathedral to the public.

6.4.2 *The Cheshire Military Museum*

The Cheshire Military Museum occupies a wing of the Thomas Harrison designed court and military complex on the Chester Castle site. It was originally the accommodation for both soldiers and officers. The museum tells the story of the soldiers of Cheshire from the 17th century until today and contains displays with collections and a separate archive with material from five antecedent regiments of what is today the Mercian Regiment. Entry is paid.

The museum has strong links with the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester. The University offers a Master's degree in Military History and, in conjunction with the museum, runs an annual visiting speaker programme in military history. During their second year, students complete a five-week placement at the museum where they have access to the archives for academic and student research.

6.4.3 *Chester History and Heritage*

Chester History and Heritage is a local and family history resource centre housed in St Michael's Church. There are simple temporary exhibitions usually using photographs of Chester from the database which is available there for research and there is a video of Chester in the past. Entry is free of charge. The staff are friendly and knowledgeable and answer enquiries from the public. There are reminiscence sessions and volunteers supporting family history research. The resources available to visitors include books, pamphlets, directories and maps of Chester, which can be freely consulted on site and there are microfiche copies of Chester parish registers, census and electoral rolls. Chester History and Heritage organise the very popular Heritage Open Days in the city, in collaboration with Chester Civic Society.

6.4.4 *Bishops Lloyd's Palace*

Bishops Lloyd's Palace is the headquarters of the Chester Civic Society. It is open to the public free of charge from noon to 2pm (Monday to Thursday) and from 1 pm to 3 pm on the first Saturday of every month. Viewing at other times by individuals and groups can be made by special arrangement. It is also available for hire as a venue for talks and social events.

6.4.5 *The Water Tower and Bonewaldesthorpe Tower*

There are proposals from Big Heritage to open up these towers in the near future as visitor attractions, with interpretation on public and personal health themes. The details are currently being finalised.

6.4.6 *The Dewa Roman Experience*

The Dewa Roman Experience is a paid attraction and is privately run on a site which was excavated in the 1990's and which has exposed remains showing Roman, Saxon and Medieval archaeology. Objects on display within theatrical sets are contemporary or purchased from abroad and are not related to Chester. The displays are largely static but there is a recently added activity space where visitors can try on Roman armour, fire a catapult or make a mosaic. Costumed Roman soldiers take groups with facsimile Roman shields and swords to carry out drills in the Roman amphitheatre. This is popular with schools, who form a large part of the visitor audience but the attraction also has booked and walk up visitors.

6.5 Visual arts

6.5.1 *Hryre Light Artwork at St John the Baptist's Church*

A permanent light artwork that is projected onto the ruins of St John the Baptist's Church was created in 2012 by Artist Nayan Kulkarni to explore the medieval heritage of Chester and the church. It drew on the research of the Mapping Medieval Chester project and was part of Discover Medieval Chester, which aimed to share that research with wider audiences. The title "Hryre" is the word for ruin in Old English, and the projections across the ruins at St John's are formed from fragments of medieval texts which describe the city of Chester in English, Latin and Welsh.

6.5.2 *Lead artist for public art*

CWaC has begun the delivery of a 10-year programme of visual arts commissioning in key sites across the authority, building on research and learning through lead artists' projects. The framework for commissioning layers creative engagement, residencies, temporary and permanent commissioning, and delivers this programme through innovation, flexibility and dynamism. In Chester, lead artist David Cottrell has produced a strategy entitled "Hide, Traverse, Scale and Float – Chester's public realm possibilities". The strategy sets out to create "a cultural landscape that supports distinctive, surprising and articulate responses to place".

Float is the first theme to be implemented. *Float* is a series of artists' commissions that acknowledge Chester's evolving relationship with water. It is connected to the Chester Waterways Strategy and runs for an initial twelve months, with new permanent and temporary artworks commissioned. Each element of the series will follow a similar pattern: a signature artwork from an established artist, smaller work from an emerging artist, commissioned writing, an online and interactive presence, an opening event and a schools' or community project to augment one of the commissions.

The improvements to King Charles' Tower gardens will form the initial stage of this programme. The gardens, below the King Charles' Tower have been landscaped to make the tower and the walls more visible and open up a pedestrian route from the canal into the city. A light projection artwork titled *Maelstrom* will be the first artwork commissioned. This will be supported by temporary artworks and a school engagement programme.

6.5.3 The Grosvenor Museums

A permanent gallery space with a regular programme of changing exhibitions which includes the display of traditional, modern and contemporary art.

6.5.4 Independent/commercial galleries

There are independent commercial galleries selling contemporary art and one specialising in Victorian paintings usually landscapes. The Arc is a small town centre gallery and shop in Commonhall Street. It sells high quality craft work which includes jewellery, ceramics, wood metalwork and textiles. Next door to this, local designer Nick Munro a local designer has a shop displaying and selling his (mostly tableware or personal) designs in pewter, ceramics, glass and stainless steel.

6.5.5 The Funky Aardvark

<http://www.funkyaardvark.co.uk> on Watergate Row provides courses in drawing, painting and craft work and displays the products which are created. It also offers a range of independently produced art and craftworks for sale and has themed exhibitions and displays of individuals' work, as part of a changing programme throughout the year. Chester Cathedral also offers exhibitions of art and sculpture and is planning to increase the range and scale on offer with a major exhibition in 2017.

6.5.6 Contemporary Art Space Chester

The Contemporary Art Space Chester, now closed, was space for the display and performance of art, located at the Kingsway site of the University of Chester. It sat alongside the Art and Design Department where students study Fine Art, Photography and Graphic Design. The gallery was used to display the latest work from staff and students throughout the academic year and host shows from invited artists. The venue was considered to be in a poor location as a result was not well visited by the general public. Its closure has left a gap however in the presentation of the visual arts.

6.6 Events

6.6.1 *The Chester Mystery Plays*

The Chester Mystery Plays date back to the 14th century and were revived in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain. They are a cycle of Passion plays based on iconic texts from the Bible and cover stories from the creation to the last judgment. They now take place every five years and will next be performed in 2018. Originally they were created by the guilds who took responsibility alone or in collaboration with other guilds for individual stories. These were played out in different parts of the city. The plays are now performed in the cathedral and were enjoyed by 11,000 people in 2013. The Chester Mystery Plays are the largest community theatre in the country.

The events are organised by Chester Mystery Plays Ltd, which is a charitable company run by volunteers. In recent years, the productions have been in collaboration with Theatre in the Quarter, which has added a popular musical dimension to the performances.

Outside the five year cycle of production/performance, the profile of the Mystery Plays can be difficult to maintain (although there has been some notable success with miniature productions including a performance of Chester City Passion on Good Friday in 2016). An innovative approach to maintaining its profile through some form of permanent exhibition/display and/or other means of interpretation would make this unique five yearly event more accessible.

6.6.2 *Theatre in the Quarter*

Theatre in the Quarter is a registered charity and has a core team of three professional directors. They deliver community based theatre and music projects and, during a busy period, there can be up to 25 paid artists involved. They receive financial support from CWaC and apply for a variety of grants.

They recently delivered 'Over by Christmas' a successful First World War themed community drama project that engaged 20,000 people, either as performers or in audiences. This took place at railway stations all over Cheshire and at St Pancras. As well as involvement in the Chester Mystery Plays, they have recently worked with Churches Together to produce a dramatised "Way of the Cross" in the streets of Chester on Good Friday. This year they are working in Blacon on a project called 'Best Days of Our Lives' which will culminate in a performance in Chester Cathedral that will explore the experiences of children growing up in Chester in the past.

6.6.3 *The Chester parades*

Supported by the Council and engaging schools and community participants, the parades are rooted in history and based on archival research. The techniques for making the giants use traditional skills like coracle making which were used in the 17th century to make them lightweight. The different participants such as devils and angels were paid for by different guilds. Symbolic participants include a pirate ship, an elephant and castle ridden by a cupid shooting arrows, dragons, the Chester ravens, a unicorn, a stag, a hobby horses, a devil band

and dancers. Work takes place in schools across Chester where children make costumes that they wear in the parades.

The puppets are made and stored in a large workshop, which is the former backstage of the old Gateway theatre. This space is full of enormous models of horses, fish, dragons and the rest of the parade cast. The parades are linked to the Mystery Plays and have some of the same characters. The midsummer watch only used to take place in years when there was no Mystery Play but now take place in the same years as well.

Parades through the year include the midsummer watch, two winter watch parades, two lantern parades, one which heralds the beginning of the Christmas lights, a St Georges Day parade and a Roman parade done in conjunction with the Roman Tours Company.

A permanent home is needed for the storage which could also provide public display.

6.6.4 The Medieval Minstrels' Court

The Minstrels' Court event is held in St John's Church, St John's Church was Chester's first cathedral and the oldest church in the city. Musicians play throughout the day on medieval instruments including bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, shawm, and harps. There are also storytelling performances, displays of arming a knight, historic craft demonstrations and a range of medieval characters including soldiers, weavers, doctors, nuns, pilgrims and scribes. The event celebrates the licensing of musicians and entertainers which took place every year from 1204 to 1756. This disappeared for over 250 years until it was revived in 2008 by St John's Church in partnership with the museum and community groups.

6.7 Chester's Heritage Activities

6.7.1 Town criers

Chester has its own male and female town criers who welcome tourists to the town from The Cross at noon on particular days depending on the time of year. There are also a number of different costumed and plain clothed guides.

6.7.2 Blue and Green Badge Guides

Qualified Blue and Green Badge Guides offer different sightseeing tours and themed walks all year round for both groups and individual visitors. Between May and October, there are three guided walks each day and from November until Easter there are two. These last for about an hour and a half and include a general tour and themed tours on: the rows, the walls, secret Chester and a ghost tour.

6.7.3 Roman Tours

A company called Roman Tours provides authentic costumed soldiers for school visits to Chester and works in collaboration with the Grosvenor Museum. They pride themselves on their

historical accuracy, constantly updating their knowledge and equipment as archaeology uncovers new information. They also offer tours of the city for pre-booked groups and individuals. Additionally, they provide project-based activities, some in partnership with community organisations such as “Build a Roman Fort week”. This runs over nine days involving more than 100 Roman enactors in a live experiment to discover how long it would have taken to build a turf rampart Roman fort.

6.7.4 Chester Civil War Tours

Chester Civil War Tours also offer authentic costumed tours around Chester on three themes which last between one hour and three. In the city centre, these are “The Great Siege of Chester” and “The Civil War Pub Tour”. A tour on the “Battle of Rowton Moor” is also offered just outside of Chester near Waverton. They also provide booked talks, given in costume and with visual aids and handling materials on six topics around politics, religion and social history during the civil War period.

6.7.5 Bus tours

There is a heritage bus tour available in a 1910 vintage open topped bus. A costumed conductor gives a commentary to passengers on heritage aspects of the route.

6.7.6 Chester Unlocked: Hoot’s Routes and the Chester Codex

Hoot’s Routes was a family trail of discovery to find the 30 museum objects hidden in participating Chester businesses. The Hoots character was a small owl taken from a sandstone carving of the Roman goddess Minerva in Handbridge. Maps with clues were available from participating shops. The Chester Codex is a series of code breaking challenges involving riddles and buried treasure with voucher prizes which can be spent in participating shops. This is a joint initiative linked to a trail and a quiz and has been developed with the CH1 BID and Big Heritage.

6.7.7 Viking encampments at St John’s Church

There are a number of Viking encampments throughout the year in the grounds of St John’s Church. Members of the public can observe and join in with Viking crafts like coin striking, see the Viking Slave Market, warrior arming and battle demonstrations. There is also a performance of the Ingimund Saga.

6.7.8 Annual living history fair at St John’s Church

In keeping with the different eras encapsulated in the church, this living history event now attracts re-enactors from all over the United Kingdom.

6.8 Chester’s stories told through its buildings

Chester has many significant historic buildings and monuments which have been built, adapted and rebuilt over the course of the last 2,000 years. As different periods brought new economic and social needs, and as different construction styles and materials were available, buildings of different styles were constructed next to and on top of older ones. As a result, the city today has a very rich mix of built heritage which tells its stories eloquently and creates an environment which is full of vivid backdrops and contrasting experiences.

The Romans created the legionary fortress Deva in around 75 AD. An outer wall was constructed to protect the city and was subject to several overlays in the centuries that followed. After the Romans left, their buildings fell into ruins and the rubble on their crossroads became the foundations of Chester Rows.

When Edward I carried out his campaigns in Wales, the elevated Chester Castle was his headquarters and mustering point. The best builders and craftsmen were funnelled through Chester and their skills were used in the city's early construction.

During the middle ages, the owners of land taxed the people who traded on their property. Taxes became excessive and merchants established guilds to protect their interests. In Chester they were powerful and influential and some of the Chester Rows were named after the trades that dominated them. The influences of the guilds are still visible in the cityscape today.

Chester was also an important religious centre and some of the religious buildings were a focus for the highest quality construction and stonemasonry. The Benedictine monastery of St Werburgh was a lavish building with a large abbey church which was later to become Chester Cathedral.

During the Civil War, Chester was one of the last Royalists strongholds and suffered a long siege. The city walls were reinforced in preparation for defence and Charles II stayed twice in Chester, giving his name to the King Charles Tower.

Well before the development of Liverpool, Chester was an important regional centre for trade and industry, using raw materials which came through the busy port of Chester and exporting goods by the same route. Later a canal was constructed to link the city to Nantwich, as the burgeoning port of Liverpool grew on the back of the triangular trade.

By 1700 Chester was losing its dominance as a regional economic hub. The cotton industry which exploded in Lancashire shifted the balance of trade and industry. But Chester's markets and fairs continued to flourish with an economy based mainly upon consumption and services which were offered to the surrounding area with which it was so well connected.

During the Georgian period, Chester became a fashionable place to live. Many new houses were built and some existing smaller properties were combined to create larger ones. In places, buildings were re-fronted in brick and classical façades were overlaid on earlier constructions.

In the Victorian and Edwardian periods many buildings were either constructed or refaced with black and white half-timbering, inspired by the city's picturesque Tudor and Stuart houses. John Douglas designed many buildings for the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor estate and made a great contribution to Chester's townscape, including the Eastgate Clock.

Today, the Roman remains are clearly visible in the amphitheatre and in many other locations around the city, often woven into the fabric of later constructions. Every period of history is clearly visible and every notable event is etched somewhere in the cityscape. Notable sites, buildings and structures include: Chester Walls and Towers, Chester Rows, the cathedral and Abbey Square, the medieval churches, Chester Castle and the associated buildings of Napier and Colvin House, Bishop Lloyd's Palace, Booth's Mansion, Leche House, Stanley Palace, the Guildhall, the Bluecoat Hospital, Gamul House and several other public houses, the Old Bishops' Palace, the race course, the River Dee, the Groves, the canal, Crane Warf and Grosvenor Park.

7 Conclusions – SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The significant heritage value in Chester’s buildings, monuments, collections and objects is well recognised by all stakeholders. ○ The research has demonstrated that Chester is known and valued as a heritage city. ○ The heritage is very visible and very present all around the city. ○ There is evidence of a continuous story over 2000 years. ○ The assets (buildings, monuments, collections etc.) are generally of good quality and are in good condition. ○ Many of the city’s assets are already well known ‘brands’ including the zoo, the walls and the Rows. ○ The city already uses many of its heritage assets in diverse and sustainable ways – as shops, pubs, offices etc. As a result, a diverse range of audience already access heritage in different ways on a regular basis. The value of this has been developed through initiatives such as Chester Unlocked. ○ Cultural activity (such as Chester Performs – now Storyhouse - and Theatre in the Quarter) is acknowledged by stakeholders as being of exceptional quality. ○ Recent interventions in interpretation have been of very high quality. ○ The city has recently adopted a Cultural Strategy and Public Art Framework which provide a strategic approach to development. ○ The city is perceived as offering attractive heritage ‘social spaces’ – unique environments which facilitate social engagement between family and friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The museum is not accessible to all visitors. ○ In many ways, the museum does not meet modern expectations or do justice to Chester’s heritage – for example the range and nature of displays, the opportunities it provides to tell the city’s stories, the layout of the building, the services and facilities. ○ The city’s heritage is presented in a fragmented way. Stories are not told comprehensively or consistently. ○ Stakeholders agree that culture in the city is perceived by everyone as secondary to heritage, rather than an equal ‘partner’. ○ In Liverpool and Manchester where culture is more high profile and extensive. ○ There is a lack of access to contemporary arts and crafts. ○ Infrastructure for the visual arts is poor with few venues, no venue for touring exhibitions, little flexibility with regards to different types of contemporary arts and no venue of any scale or significance. ○ There are no studio spaces for contemporary artists. ○ The archives are not in suitable accommodation and current facilities do not meet current expectations in terms of access.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The city has a distinctive tradition of processions, parades and outdoor theatre which has been developed over many years. ○ Chester will soon be opening a new cultural centre, Storyhouse. ○ The opening of Storyhouse and the new Northgate shopping centre will effectively create a new leisure and entertainment quarter in the city with a strong cultural dimension. ○ There is a high level of individual personal interest and commitment to heritage. Many stakeholders are engaged in heritage activity in a professional or voluntary capacity. ○ The University has a strong commitment to the visual arts and is keen to improve the appeal of the city to students and graduates. ○ Politicians and strategic partners recognise the city's potential for heritage and visual arts and support an ambitious strategy for future development. ○ The research reveals that the city has a strong appeal as a short break destination. ○ The Castle is a significant heritage asset which at present is unused. It has the opportunity to be transformed into a major new heritage and cultural quarter in the city. ○ The new Northgate scheme presents a range of opportunities for the city, in terms of improved animation and opportunities for display. ○ The Lead Artists strategy provides opportunities for effective development of the visual arts. ○ The city has good travel links particularly to London and the south east. ○ Opportunity for active engagement in archaeological activity's and increase in access and interpretation of finds/research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The city is less appealing as a place to live and work for arts graduates than other major cities in the North West. As a result, fewer graduates choose to stay after graduation. ○ The city is relatively small and (with the exception of the Castle) has limited sites for development of new cultural and heritage facilities. ○ People at present believe that the city provides limited reasons to come back and that the offer is not refreshed often enough. ○ Securing funding from all sources is becoming increasingly difficult. ○ Loss of knowledge and skills in the sector.

