

Creative Industries

Gareth Hart and **Kevin Brownridge** outline how Cornwall is set to become a big success both at home and abroad.

Creative convergence

Culture and creativity in Cornwall are bucking the recessionary trend. The Duchy is celebrating two recent major investments into the arts. Around £0.75m of Arts Council England cash will help take creativity out into local communities, and the European Union has earmarked £350,000 to back a bid to make Cornwall the first European Region of Culture. These two successes are not mere good fortune. They follow years of partnership and development work to raise the profile and quality of the creative sector in Cornwall. Much of this development was enabled by over £43m of European Objective One funding for the creative industries between 2000 and 2006. A recent report by Perfect Moment consultancy, 'Counting on Creativity', demonstrated the success of Cornwall's creative industries under the Objective One programme, and helped prepare the ground for future economic growth. The findings of the report are encouraging: for example, £10m of investment in business support and skills development resulted in the generation of £104m extra turnover by the sector. This is especially impressive bearing in mind that, at the outset of Objective One, Cornwall's creative industries were not seriously considered in economic terms.

Natural home

Ross Williams, Director of Arts Centre Trust – a charity dedicated to supporting all things creative in Cornwall – said about the recent developments that, "The last few years have seen a significant increase in investment in people, as well as key capital schemes, feeding directly into the rapid growth in the size and prosperity of the sector". Creativity and Cornwall have long gone hand in hand. The area's inspiring scenery and unique quality of light have served as a powerful magnet for artists since the late 19th century, producing the famous Newlyn and St Ives schools, and later the prestigious Falmouth School of Art (now University College, Falmouth). Cornwall is well known for its artistic heritage and thriving crafts scene. Its creative industries



Cornwall will be the first European region of culture

development agencies have built on this rich tradition and have helped to nurture a coherent sector where the general level of partnership work, activity, energy and aspiration has grown enormously.

There are many reasons for this impressive growth, one of which is very simple: more people want to live here. Cornwall's stunning landscape, proximity to the beach and the perception of a laid-back lifestyle are all strong draws. Cornwall, once seen as too distant for those wanting to pursue high-flying careers, is now a perfectly viable workplace with improved broadband and transport links. Moreover, many sub-sectors within the creative industries are particularly suited to remote working. The increased lure for creative businesses and practitioners to base themselves in Cornwall – not to mention the galvanisation and growing success of those already in the county – is also largely due to the considerable partnership development and sector support in the region. Cornwall Arts Marketing delivered high-profile promotional activities which significantly raised the sector's profile; Creative Skills addressed individual artists training needs; Creative Kernow provided strategic insight; University College Falmouth supported skills development, business contacts and movement into the workplace; and the media

sector received help from Cornwall Film. These agencies are evolving and changing their structures but they continue, in one form or another, to drive the development of the creative sector.

International growth

This thriving network of creative agencies has helped support approximately 350 companies and between 2,400 and 2,500 people over the last few years. The help available varied hugely, from individual mentoring, training and travel bursaries, to initiating the first music sessions at the Eden Project and launching a national marketing campaign via The Guardian newspaper. The 'Counting on Creativity' report recommends that a future emphasis on export is vital

to the sector's sustainability. The seeds for a strong export market are already sown: 42% of Cornish creative industry businesses already earn at least half their income from outside Cornwall, and 15% do not earn any of their income from Cornwall. Despite the current recession, the international market for creative industries products and services is predicted to grow in the long term; the challenge now is to make the most of this opportunity. Creative practitioners and enterprises need to be encouraged to place themselves in national and international arenas, not only to build new customer bases and avoid the saturation of the local market, but also to raise the standards of their work. Williams adds, "The challenge for new funding programmes is to keep up momentum: to keep strengthening Cornwall's remarkable range of partnerships, to make the most of the new opportunities and to help the sector cope with the challenges of the recession and come out of it ready to prosper again." The credit crunch and national recession will have an impact on the arts in Cornwall but, as recent investments prove, there is still a bright and creative light shining in the far west of the UK. ■

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◀ See a Voice ▶

Invitations to tender

See a Voice is a joint STAGETEXT and VocalEyes initiative which received funding from Round 8 of the Treasury's Invest to Save budget and from ACE Grants for the Arts.

Working with theatre venues throughout England, the See a Voice project is helping develop in-house captioning and audio description services, exploring different models of collaborative working and addressing barriers to sustainability.

This 3.5 year project, due to conclude in March 2010, is now inviting tenders for 2 key project activities:

Project evaluation

To complete a comprehensive project evaluation over the course of the final year of activity.

Audience research project

To research audience expectations in terms of quality standards in assisted performances.

To receive either brief please email info@see-a-voice.org or call 020 7377 0978 stating: EVALUATION or RESEARCH

Deadline for submissions:
10am Monday 9 February 2009

