

Notes from the Town Team Working Group – Monday 19th October 2015

Present: Helen Nathanson, Frances Northrop, Lindsay Garner, Mike Craddock, Cllr John Green

Purpose of the Meeting: To identify common themes from recent consultations on projects relating to Culture, Heritage and Public Realm. These themes will then form the basis of our consultation at the next Neighbourhood Planning event.

Resources: Market Square consultations (Totnes Trust and Town Team), Atmos Consultation, Rotherfold Improvement Project, Baltic Wharf Arts, Mansion Consultation, *Creativity in Community-Led Planning*, Hidden Britain Reports

1. Having read the resources above, there were several common themes apparent. These include:

Planting and gardens- trees and greenery in public places are important

People don't want to maintain open spaces voluntarily - job creation opportunities are a possibility with new projects

Public art – making spaces beautiful as well as practical with focal point artwork in public spaces

Making spaces practical as well as beautiful – Rotherfold consultations showed in favour of creating a Garden Square rather than a Town Garden to that the Space can still be used for community events such as markets and theatre

Seating so that the spaces can be used and enjoyed

Car parking for visitors/shoppers - there is a need to maintain the balance between residents' and Chamber of Commerce priorities

Cycle parking spaces are being created which suggests a need/desire for more

Lighting is important to people but tasteful rather than brash and for safety

Avoid being too unified – it's the best market in a wide area because it's not a uniform setting and is not gentrified

Market Square- when there is no market it's not a particularly nice place to be

The link between public realm and culture is that culture is about what has and is happening in our spaces, many of which are historic.

A need for planning control over the type shops so that we preserve those which are appropriate to a market town and not just a visitor centre

If the culture of the town is retail and independent shops then this must be protected at every level including preservation of car parking spaces.

Ownership of spaces and land within the town - local control of the market so that is run more carefully, just as local control has preserved the culture of street cafés

2. So...what is the culture of Totnes? We thought:

1. Its status as a Market Town
2. Performance arts such as cinema, theatre, reading groups
3. Learning - Language Schools, Adult Education, variety of secondary education
4. Heritage and Civic traditions
5. Food – Markets, Cafes and food shops, organic and local produce
6. Independence – the “quirkiness”, alternative therapy, Transition Movement

The Group agreed that we need to consult with a younger group to gather their ideas but that these six themes would be used to guide feedback at the next consultation event. We will also make sure that our ideas are posted on the town’s Facebook Groups to encourage a wide range of responses.

3. Agenda for the next Town Team meeting will be to discuss the findings above and to work through the cultural audit (below).

Cultural audit, taken from *Creativity in Community-Led Planning*

How to carry out a cultural audit for your community-led planning document

Make a list of built assets that could be used for cultural events and activities such as village halls, churches, museums, galleries, cinemas, schools, libraries, youth centres, listed historical monuments or buildings

Make a list of open/shared spaces which could be used for cultural purposes, eg village greens, town squares

Find out how frequently the built assets and open spaces are used for cultural purposes, and what cultural activities they are used for eg amateur dramatics, upholstery classes, life drawing, film screenings, fashion shows, reading groups, sewing/knitting groups, photography clubs. Are the assets under used or is there a demand for them? Are the assets used to capacity and additional (or alternative) facilities are required? Are new technologies or equipment required in order to make better use of existing facilities/assets?

List regular cultural events which happen in the area eg fairs, markets

Consider how often the built assets and open spaces listed are used for non-cultural purposes

If preparing a questionnaire for residents to complete, ensure a question is included about attitudes to culture and heritage in the area.

Try to draw some conclusions based on all of the above information about how well culture and heritage is provided for in your area, and are there ways that it could be better provided for? Is culture and heritage valued by all residents or by particular sections of residents more than others? Are particular cultural assets valued by younger people compared to older people, or is it more divided by interest?