Culture, heritage and identity: issues and objectives

‘Our vision for the next quarter-century has to be of a town where we make sense of our common life through shared cultural experience, enjoying elements of that experience together, and respecting those bits that we as individuals don’t happen to enjoy. A town whose cultural life helps us to know and celebrate who we are and where we belong, and to offer these things to others’.

Setting the context

Many respondents to the Community Survey wanted to protect the area’s heritage and culture; many also recognized that cultures are not fixed and unchanging. They take account of new experience as well as old; above all, they change through our encounters with other people, their experiences, their culture, their difference.

The cultural experience of living in Penzance is neither simple nor all of a piece. It can be different for those who have lived all their lives here, for those who have come to live here from elsewhere, or for others who have gone away and come back. It can be the experience of professionals and prosperous retirees, or of people living on benefits and seasonal, minimum-wage jobs, or of contract-workers from overseas. It will be one thing – probably several – for those past retirement age; another – again, perhaps more – for those under twenty-five.

Our common culture (and our quality of life) will be stronger insofar as it draws together elements of all these and more. It will be weaker insofar as each group lives in a little cultural world of its own. Things will be worse still if all or several of these fault-lines come to coincide, so that divisions between relatively privileged areas and the rest are culturally reinforced. The sharply-polarized housing market tends, in any case, to bring that about; the MCTI Youth Consultation has found signs that the rival lifestyle groups of ‘emos’ and ‘chavs’ are territorial in the same way. If we do not want these divisions to harden, we have to recognize them and resist their effects.

Scale and scope

This is most readily achieved if the range of cultural experience and activity on offer is ambitious and comprehensive. That is a perfectly reasonable goal for a town of 20,000 people. Penzance, with its active traditions in craftwork and the arts, and its vigorous amateur involvements, has something of a head start – but also some familiar
Cornish anxieties about funding and infrastructure. Even with all that voluntary input, the cultural provision which Penzance needs will not come cheap. But trying to get away with only minimal provision for those needs will certainly do harm to our common life.

**The claims of heritage**

Preserving heritage and making cultural life happen now are matching, not rival concerns. What we seek to protect as ‘heritage’ cannot just be the image of a timeless, picturesque, folkloric past. That leaves out too much of the real past which has shaped this town and its hinterland.

The ancient sites of the Penwith countryside are not timeless; they can only be understood as products of time and change and human adaptation. The industries that drove the construction of our harbours, and paid for the neat townhouses of the Victorian gentry, have histories of hardship, conflict and painful recent decline which no truthful account can gloss over. The local culture of Penzance in our own time is different because of experience which people bring to it from elsewhere. Each generation will add changes of its own.

We need to preserve sites, buildings, artefacts and documents because they help us to know better who we are, where we are, how we got here, and what kinds of life will be possible for us in the future. What we preserve should help link that knowledge with our changing experiences and needs. Heritage must be an element in a living, changing culture.

**A cultural life for one and all**

The outward migration of people in their twenties, looking for work and self-realization is not always a bad thing: it can make them value what they had here; that in turn can draw them back, to enrich local culture from their wider experience. But without worthwhile jobs and affordable houses to return to, that will not happen. As things stand, we have too few people in their energetic middle years. Though work by the New Economic Foundation does point to a recent rise in the number of people in their 30s opting to live in Cornwall, our local population is still, to some degree, polarized between the young and the retired or elderly.

The two groups differ in their typical modes of cultural exchange: reading or directly shared experience among the old; the young, relying on ever-more personalized electronic media. That does not mean a total cultural divide. Internet access (for cultural among other purposes) is something that makes life here possible for many older people. Lack of live events (not always the same events) outside the tourist season is a topic of complaint among young and old alike.

The need remains to create spaces, both virtual and physical, for a cultural conversation between the generations. Craft apprenticeships, music, dance and drama workshops, community events and education (as in the range of initiatives supported by Penwith College) can all offer areas of shared cultural activity. Penzance Public Library and the Penzance Art School do much in this way and, given room to vary the norms handed down from county and central government, could do more.
Redressing disadvantage

Cultural activity needs to be fostered and promoted in all areas of Penzance, including the less advantaged. It would be a simple enough matter to monitor how much of this goes on in areas with high indices of deprivation. Attractive notions like that of a ‘cultural industries quarter’ must be balanced against the claims of regeneration. Failure to do this will only reinforce cultural division.

Culture, heritage and identity: objective 1

To facilitate the exchange of cultural experience across different age-groups and areas in Penzance, as a basic strategy in preventing the emergence of a culturally divided community

Considerations will include:
- How to bring different generations together to share and understand each other’s cultural experiences
- How to make each generation more at ease with cultural media familiar to the other
- Using apprenticeship, training, and volunteer programmes in the creative industries to give more young people career prospects, and to re-skill people of all ages for work and leisure
- Using performance workshops with professional facilitators to extend the cultural aspiration of all age-groups
- The role within all this of the skills and FE programmes of Penwith College
- Delivering these things to all parts of Penzance
- Monitoring the delivery of cultural events and initiatives in the most disadvantaged Super Output Areas
- Widening the social and age range of those who run cultural facilities and activities
- Supporting the role of libraries in broadening and diversifying cultural participation
- Making sure that cultural provision for the young is diverse enough in location and in the times when it is available

Potential partners:
- Penwith District Council*
- Penzance Town Council
- Penlee House Gallery and Museum
- Newlyn Art Gallery / Exchange
- Penzance Public Library, Morrab Library
- Penwith College
- Creative Skills
- Acorn Theatre
- Shallal Dance Company
- Friends of Penzance Art School
- Voice of the Arts in Newlyn
- Penzance, Mousehole choirs
- Penzance Film Society
- Digital Peninsula Network
- Golowan Festival Committee
- Treneere Together
- Penzance Central Initiative

St Just, with a population of just over 2000, has its own purpose-built Youth Centre; Penzance, not far short of 20,000, has not. What does this tell us about our town?
On being Cornish

The Cornish dimension in local life and culture takes many forms: landscapes and seascapes, monuments, building styles, lost or precarious traditional industries, tourist images of 'Cornishness', surviving or revived customs and festivals, the Cornish language. Or it can simply be the day to day awareness of a situation and experience are not just precisely what they would be in England – and among those who grew up here, the sense that ‘this is how it belongs’.

Whether they have always lived in Cornwall or come to settle here later in life, Penzance people generally value these markers of local difference. Some ways of valuing them can prove unhelpful. People drawn here by a quality of life which serves their own personal growth can all too easily overlook the area’s basic and continuing problems. Proponents of Cornish culture run their own risks of subjectivity. An achieved cultural identity has to be a channel of interchange with neighbours, not a barrier to it. Being Cornish involves responsibilities to Cornwall as it was and is, not merely to what we might wish it to be. That said, being Cornish is a fundamental aspect of the area’s identity – an identity in which its people, Cornish-born or not, share and are entitled to share.

Despite the controversy attending its proper forms, the revived Cornish language is more visible in the Penzance streets than a generation ago, and (with educational support at County level) looks set to become more so. This has to be welcome as an apt enrichment of the experience of living here. Even if most people’s knowledge of Cornish stops short at a few set phrases and a sense of place-name meanings, that in itself (like the flag of St Piran) can support a shared self-awareness, even self-confidence. We need as much of the latter as we can get.

Culture, heritage and identity: objective 2

To promote the wider use of the Cornish language

Considerations will include:
- Supporting Cornish language workshops in schools and in adult education provision
- Potential use of English and Cornish together on place-name and street-name signs
- Extending the use of Cornish to key messages and phrases in everyday local life
- Promoting the Cornish language at festivals and events
- Embedding these developments in a more widely-shared and rigorously understood awareness of the actual past and present of Cornwall (and specifically of the Penzance area); and an approach to future economic development that respects and builds upon the resulting self-awareness

Potential partners:
- Cornwall County Council (Highways)
- CCC Cornish Language Development Manager
- Maga: Cornish Language Partnership
- Penwith College, partner schools, Adult education providers
- Penzance Public Library, Morrab Library
Culture and development: scale and scope

Existing spaces in Penzance for theatrical and musical performance are not purpose-built. Few are the right size for economically viable numbers; not all are acoustically suitable. Experience at the Acorn Theatre (as at the Hall for Cornwall) suggests that our limited population base may make these problems harder to resolve. (Even so, the Acorn, with its high degree of autonomy and its richly varied experience of offering community performance-space, has to be pivotal in any strategy for improved provision.)

For music, church buildings, though clearly not suitable for every type of musical event, can often meet the acoustic requirements better. They will become less available, however, as congregations find their upkeep harder to afford, and some have problems of access which cannot be addressed out of their own resources. The Newlyn Centre, with its multi-purpose character, and its commitment to local history and community confronts this situation with striking success – not necessarily replicable, of course, across the whole area.

Smaller spaces for rehearsals, recitals, courses, lectures, readings, etc. are rather haphazardly available – not always where most needed. The workshop dimension of the Newlyn Art Gallery’s new Exchange building is a welcome recent addition. In general, the visual arts are the sector best provided for. Besides its two significant public galleries, Newlyn and Penlee House, Penzance has several dozen private or commercial galleries.

At a more intimate level, Penzance has a thriving ‘café culture’, which provides informal growing-points for many cultural initiatives. In principle, this is best left to be informal, but some linkage might be devised between groups looking for meeting-places and meeting-places looking for groups. In general, however, vigorously proactive planning, versatile use of existing and newly-created spaces, and the funding to provide and maintain them, will all be needed for cultural activities to flourish as they should.

Premises

Culture, heritage and identity: objective 3

To achieve for the Penzance area a sufficient, varied and appropriately sited range of venues for cultural and artistic events and undertakings

Considerations will include:
- Whether church congregations can afford the upkeep of spaces previously available for some events with larger audiences
- The advantages to the town of having a venue of its own, that can host large-scale events, some with a national profile
- Ways in which this might fit other development strategies (e.g. Penzance as a conference venue)
Future cultural life in Penzance will depend, as now, on a high degree of amateur and voluntary involvement. Recent anniversaries of the Penzance Orchestral Society and the Penzance Choir, and the Morrab Library’s long history, show how effective this can be. People want Penzance to remain that kind of town. But when cultural activities, funding and organization come to rely too much on personal commitment, problems can arise. At worst (as with the Royal Cornwall Geological Society), cultural groups can be wrecked by faction. Less dramatically, active memberships can dwindle in number, or grow old. Some groups will need to renew contact with professional standards in their field; all of them need to avoid turning cliquish and exclusive, and to find fresh ways of enhancing community life. The community itself needs to take thought about limiting the risks, fostering good practice, and repairing the occasional disaster.

Especially helpful for continuity and renewal are schemes where professionals and young beginners work together, delivering quality and expertise in a context of discovery and enthusiasm: the work of the Shallal Dance Company, or programmes of instrumental tuition for young musicians. Provision for such work, within and beyond formal education, has to be part of our cultural planning.

Potential partners:
- Penwith District Council*
- Churches Together
- Arts Council England South West
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Penwith College
- Local schools
- Newlyn Art Gallery / Exchange
- Newlyn Trinity Centre
- Acorn Theatre
- Theatre, music and performance groups

People
In one sense, of course, this is the most basic concern of all: as one informant put it: ‘Penzance needs economic revitalization first and the cultural support will follow.’ Many cultural undertakings, though, contribute in their own way to the processes of economic revitalization. The value to the local economy of Penzance’s long-established array of creative industries is well recognized. As an economic sector in their own right, they generate income, employment and the wider acquisition of skills. Their workshops, galleries and events are important assets for any growth in sustainable tourism, seeking to offer visitors things unique to the area, and to extend its season across more of the year.

This strategic importance is reflected in the support offered to creative industries by both District and County. This is partly a matter of available resources, like the well-used County Art Collection, housed in Penzance Public Library. In greater part, though, it involves help given by bodies like Cornwall Cultural Marketing, or by Penwith District Council’s Creative Industries business adviser, with such issues as finding premises, developing business plans, trademarking, copyright, distribution and marketing. Continuing help with all these – especially if it factors in wider social concerns, e.g. in matters of location or training – will be of real

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**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 4**

To cherish and sustain the Penzance tradition of creative voluntary involvement in artistic and cultural endeavours of all kinds

Considerations will include:
- Offering new voluntary cultural initiatives basic advice and help in getting started
- Creating channels of support for cultural groups in difficulty with their organizational workload
- Identifying the role of public agencies in this (e.g. advice on bid-writing or on new legislation)
- These areas apart, keeping the process light-touch and unbureaucratic– perhaps through an e-mail network of interested groups and agencies, exchanging experiences, problems and solutions
- Using educational and other structures to promote contact between local amateur groups and professional mentors, to rekindle enthusiasms and keep standards high

**Potential partners:**
- Penwith District Council*
- Cornwall Creative Unit
- Penwith Community Development Trust
- Penwith Festivals partnership
- Penwith College
- Combined Universities in Cornwall
- Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum
- Newlyn Art Gallery
- Acorn Theatre
- Music colleges
- Arts Council England South West
- South West Regional Development Agency
value. So will the already close links with Penwith College’s implementation of the Skills Development Agenda.

**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 5**

Building on the various forms of available support for creative industries, to establish this sector as a prominent and thriving element in the economic life of the Penzance area

Considerations will include:

- Making the creative industries sector an integral part of a wider strategy to achieve a high-quality, special-interest, year-round tourist industry
- Ensuring that internet facilities for the Penzance area have the speed, capacity and quality for businesses there to operate competitively
- Developing relevant electronic networks to link creative businesses with one another, with supporting agencies, and with HE / FE institutions
- Ensuring that the funding and support available to this sector are deployed to:
  - enhance the training and skills (including transferable skills) of local young people;
  - offer the same opportunities to those in other age-groups who are faced with problems of retraining or joblessness;
  - help to regenerate those parts of Penzance that most need it

**Potential partners:**

- Cornwall County Council
- Penwith District Council
- Penzance Town Council
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Cornwall Creative Unit
- Cornwall Arts Marketing
- PDC Creative Industries business adviser
- Creative Skills
- Penwith College
- Combined Universities in Cornwall
- Voice of the Arts in Newlyn
- Theatre, music and performance groups

To an outside observer, Penzance might seem to have a well-developed range of cultural events and activities. Thanks to much voluntary involvement, that is in many ways true. But the downside is a relative lack of strong cultural institutions of our own. It is true that the two major art galleries, Newlyn and Penlee, are both well-established locally and well-reputed nationally. They are also stably administered (though inflated prices in the art market could create – for Penlee in particular – some tension between the cost of acquisitions and the claims of outreach to a wider public). Both are ambitious as to outreach, in ways that go beyond the visual arts as such. Newlyn’s ‘Exchange’ space promises yet more of that sort. But the picture regarding institutions of other kinds is altogether less happy.
Recent museum closures (Geological Society, Trinity House, Pilchard Works) are cases in point. So is the merger of Penwith College, our one local higher education provider, with Truro College. Though it is clearly the intention that Penwith should be more than an outstation of Truro, we are at the end of a very long chain here: Truro itself (in this function) is an outstation of the Tremough campus, an outstation in its turn of various University-level bodies, mostly located outside Cornwall. Again, retrenchments in the public library sector, make the independent Morrab Library all the more important to Penzance, but chronic constraints on the Morrab’s space render it harder for it to respond to this. The need for a local archival study centre in Penzance has also gone obdurately unanswered until taken up, very recently, by the Penzance Civic Society.

The recent merger of Penwith College, our one local higher education provider, with Truro College seemed to underline the peripheral status of Penzance in this regard. Encouragingly, both partners have shown a practical resolve to change that status, creating within their broader “learning and skills” remit an expanded range of HE opportunities here, and working to make the Combined Universities consortium at Tremough a University for Cornwall in the full sense. These efforts have to be supported, though a general concern about peripherality remains. Its long-term test will come in the area of research and postgraduate study: whether Penzance can become a place where knowledge is not just accessible, but is actually made.

It is no accident that all these examples concern the world of ideas and arguments and public memory. This has not been recognized or supported as a necessary part of Penzance cultural life to anything like the same degree as the visual and creative arts. That attitude is demonstrated anew each time we are told (as we frequently are) that none of these things ought really to matter to us. In fact, this dimension of our cultural existence matters as much as any of the others. Getting them right may well depend on our getting this one right.

If we assume, for example, that our local culture will express a Cornish identity, we will need some reliably-founded notions about that identity. Such notions can only come from informed reflection and argument; without these, we risk falling into an unthinking hostility to outsiders and incomers by which we ourselves are diminished. That applies to all notions of identity, not just Cornish ones. But it would help if we thought rather less about ‘preserving’ Cornish identity, and rather more about developing it. Serious intellectual study of our past and present can be the key to doing that.

It would help too if we could see Cornwall not as a far-out appendage of the real world, but as a focus of important real-world experiences: the global emigration of Cornish people; the centuries-old encounter of Europe (including Celtic Europe) with the Atlantic; the future challenges of living in sustainable balance with the natural world. That past and that potential future might well resonate more excitingly than the rather dour and restricted present that a global economy seems to have dealt out to us. Or at least it might do so, given a cultural life capable of confronting and responding to them.
This makes it urgent for things to happen in Penzance that are not happening now. Alongside developments in visual and performing arts and creative industries, we need to develop a life of the mind, in which insights into our situation, identity and needs can be discussed as ideas, and promoted in practical action for the good of all. We need the kind of institution that will do for twenty-first century Cornwall what the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic did in the nineteenth century.

There is a case, too, for projecting that kind of intellectual creativity nationally (and beyond), by making any such institution a cultural landmark with the same degree of ambition as the Eden project or the St Ives Tate, and capable of attracting the kind of public drawn to Cornwall by these.

Our own past as the home of Humphry Davy creates a strong argument for creating in Penzance a focus for relevant public science, addressing the challenges and opportunities of environmental and climate change. Its form would need to be worked out with government bodies, whose input would clearly be crucial. But the initial impulse can and should come from nearer at hand.

Responding to these concerns has been made harder by the collapse of plans for a local University, whose existence (apart from being a major source of economic regeneration) could have supplied much of what was wanted. We need, as an absolute condition of a full cultural life, to pursue similar outcomes by other means, using whatever institutions do exist, and augmenting them where they fall short. Much will depend on whether Penwith College can be enabled to deliver on the far-reaching plans currently being developed within the Truro merger – for example, through Convergence Funding support for more HE courses.

Some part – but only some – of what is required will be attainable through IT linkages, ranging more widely afield than this. It is not enough, though, for people in Penzance to be able to log on to what goes on elsewhere; something has to happen here. All the Penwith area’s projected ‘Knowledge Transfer Partnerships’ with UK universities have strong existing institutions (Geevor, the Leach Pottery, St Ives Tate) as their local partners. At present Penzance cannot offer any science or humanities partners of that calibre. Only a proactive approach on our own part will secure what the town needs and deserves.

**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 6**

To ensure that the culture of words and ideas in the Penzance area is robustly supported and developed through appropriate institutions of education, study and debate

Considerations will include:

- Raising the level of discussion and analysis of Cornish issues, to generate a flow of ideas that can readily be implemented in practice for the good of all
- Making good the failure to establish a local university in Penzance, by working with those bodies that do exist to:
  - promote university-level standards of study and scholarship to underwrite the intellectual life of Penzance (and Penwith);
The claims of heritage

The buildings among which we live are a key part of our common culture: if they are good to look at, they enrich our artistic experience; if they reflect in a characteristic way aspects of the Penzance past, they help build identity. These things justify putting effort and resources into their preservation.

There will, naturally, be disagreements. Not everyone recognizes the value of typical early 20th-century buildings like Ritz Bingo, and the MCTI survey brought out some conflicting views about the Jubilee Pool. Tensions can arise between different kinds of cultural good, as in the still

-support any moves to extend the range of CUC programmes available in Penzance, as the Tremough consortium evolves into an actual university for Cornwall
- Addressing the lack, now that the Geological Museum has been lost, of any serious institution for public science in Penzance
- Environmental concerns and IT-based small businesses (both well-represented in the area) might offer ideas
- Constructively addressing the extension needs of the Morrab Library so that this unique resource can work alongside the Penzance Public Library to the full advantage of the area
- Supporting attempts to make good the long-standing lack of any Penzance equivalent to the St Ives Archive Study Centre (see below, objective 8)
- Equipping Penzance with a ‘landmark’ cultural institution of its own, similar in ambition and visitor / user potential to the National Maritime Museum, the St Ives Tate, or even the Eden Centre
- Recognizing that each of these projects has large-scale resource implications, which will oblige us to:
  - make each proposal from the outset a test-case of combining purposeful development with maximum sustainability
  - exploit the possibilities of combining two or more of them (possibly also elements of objective 3 above) in a single proposal
  - prioritize the several proposals in an overall programme (with timescales)
  - vigorously pursue potential sources of funding and partnership

Potential partners:
- Penwith District Council
- Penwith College
- Combined Universities in Cornwall
- Morrab Library
- Penzance Public Library
- Penzance Civic Society
- Cornwall Creative Unit
- Newlyn Art Gallery/ Exchange
- Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum
- Environmental groups
- Peninsular Digital Network
- Arts Council England South West
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Government Office South West
- South West Regional Development Agency

The built environment
unresolved case of the Morrab Library extension. Preserving beauty and amenity will need to be reconciled with an active economic life: one goal cannot automatically overrule the other.

But there must clearly be concern when a major feature of the town fails to receive the protection it deserves (as with John Crocker’s Rosevean House), or falls into neglect because of uncertainty about its future use (apparently the case with the Abbey Basin warehouse now). Such examples remind us of the need to be active in preserving what is unique to this aspect of our cultural environment.

So too, more negatively, do examples of architecture which we would be far better off without: Penlowarth, and much of the profile of Market Jew Street. Virtually all that can be done with these is to see that such mistakes are not repeated.

**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 7**

To identify and preserve those aspects of our physical environment that represent the cultural and historical heritage of the area

Considerations will include:
- The need for a definitive listing of buildings and facilities to be preserved and, where appropriate, restored for future generations, or sympathetically adapted to new uses
- Collaboration with organisations already engaged in such work
- Engaging with the planning process, and with developers, to ensure that proposals are sympathetically, devised and contribute positively to the identity of the area
- Ensuring that proposals for development are economically viable in terms of use
- Recognizing how a robust conservation policy can contribute to the broader well-being of the area: for example, economically, through cultural tourism; environmentally, by making high sustainability a standard feature of all proposals
- Recognizing that most decisions in these matters will involve negotiation and compromise, and that processes must be open and responsive to public comment, transparent in themselves, and capable of commanding respect for their outcomes
- Cross-reference to Housing and built environment objective 9

Potential partners:
- Penwith District Council*
- Cornwall Records Office
- Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service
- Cornwall Creative Unit
- Penzance Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Penzance Civic Society
- Newlyn Art Gallery / Exchange
- Old Cornwall Societies

Our heritage from the past also extends to memories and written records. There is no municipal archive for the latter; present and foreseeable space in the Morrab Library is wholly taken up. Even with digital access, the County collections in Truro cannot provide the 'hands
on’ familiarity which the people of St Ives have secured in their Archive Study Centre. The Penzance area urgently needs something of that sort. Oral history and the work of recording it should be an integral part of this. The interest now being taken by the Civic Society is a welcome first step in the right direction.

As for the history of present-day Penzance, the Cornishman, having moved to Truro, has become less of a newspaper of record for this area than it once was. That may correct itself in time: if it does not, Penzance may need to explore ways of creating such a paper for itself.

**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 8**

**To establish permanent, locally-sited institutions of record for Penzance, Newlyn, and their hinterland, enabling present and future generations to develop a fuller awareness of their culture, history, and opportunities**

Considerations will include:
- The absence of borough archive facilities, and the consequent gaps in existing records
- The potential for an archive study centre, either as a freestanding entity in its own right or as an element within one of the developments mooted in Objectives 3 and 6.
- Ways of making such a centre more widely known and more economically viable (e.g. by offering an information service to Cornish societies worldwide)
- Using digital remote access: for wider-ranging contacts as suggested above, and to liaise constructively with County archives and with the Cornwall Centre in Redruth (both of which suffer from spatial and resource constraints of their own)
- The value of real experience with real documents, as a way into an authentic relation with our own past, and as an essential dimension of historical research
- Linkages with collections of oral history and photographic records, providing access to a many-dimensioned record of the past
- The role of such a centre of local record in promoting a shared cultural awareness common to those who were born here, and those who have chosen to live here
- Its role in giving young people a clear sense of what it means to be raised here, and the opportunities that this presents
- The role that the information stored there could play in shaping current and future policy decisions, such as building design
- The need to monitor the performance of the Cornishman as a newspaper of public record in this area and, if necessary, to promote a more satisfactory alternative
- The desirability, as a separate development from the above of establishing a public home for the West Cornwall Art Archive in Penzance or Newlyn

**Potential partners:**
- Penwith District Council*
- Penzance Civic Society
- Penzance Civic Trust Penwith College
- University College Falmouth
A calendar of customs

Formerly, the Penzance year was a sequence of seasonal customs and feast-days; today the division of the calendar which matters most is that between the holiday season and the off-season. Reviving or establishing a year-round rhythm of community festivals is a way of reclaiming our calendar as something belonging to a common life, rather than to a basic industry. At the same time, these celebrations can usefully be foregrounded as part of an enriched tourist “offer”.

Golowan Since 1991, Golowan has been the annual event with the greatest impact. Blending rather anarchic local midsummer traditions with shrewdly-judged, imaginative revivalism, it has grown into a ten-day festival of Cornish culture, with the exuberant Mazey Day festivities at its heart. Recently, there have been warning signs of over-ambition, but the powerful determination to give it a basis of enhanced long-term stability amply justified itself in the 2007 celebration. It has clearly become a key part of the Penzance area’s cultural identity, and a potential driver of economic benefits.

Newlyn Fish Festival Also significant in both regards is the Newlyn Fish Festival in the late summer. Currently a one-day fund-raising event for the Fishermen’s Mission, and certainly capable of future expansion, this celebrates every aspect of a robustly surviving traditional industry.

Newlyn Arts Festival Newlyn Arts Festival, in mid-Autumn, has been added to the area’s calendar.

Christmas lights in Newlyn and Mousehole Spectacular Christmas light displays in both Newlyn and Mousehole attract visitors from far and wide. The Mousehole lights have links with other commemorations - the traditional revelry of Tom Bawcock’s Eve, and the modern tragedy of the lost Penlee Lifeboat. They represent a full year’s work for the village - a vital expression of community and continuity where second-home occupancy threatens to erode them.

St Piran’s Day The St Piran’s Day parade of local schoolchildren is rapidly becoming an annual landmark in early spring.

Parish feasts Traditional parish feasts and other celebrations in Madron, Mousehole and Paul are still important to those who live there. Such festivals illustrate the ready local support for events that express a distinctive local identity, especially when combined with some charitable purpose. Like much of the Penzance cultural scene, they depend very largely on the work of dedicated volunteers; material and organizational support to
make that work effective will plainly be a good investment. The District Council provides that kind of support and a measure of co-ordination.

One final reflection here. The Corpus Christi Fair – an authentically ancient event – has moved from its original site, and has become detached from its more specific local connections. Inevitably, perhaps it is now wholly overshadowed by Golowan. Could a rescue operation yet be mounted?

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**Culture, heritage and identity: objective 9**

To strengthen the area’s programme of festivals and events, and to build upon these as an element in creating an extended cultural tourism offer

Considerations will include:

- Channelling material and organizational support to groups engaged in promoting festivals and similar events in the Penzance area. Developing light-touch but effective procedures to ensure that public funding for such events is well-deployed and accounted for.
- Making recommendations for marketing the events more widely, in order to attract maximum interest (for example a stand on Paddington Station).
- Ensuring that the voluntary, charitable and traditional elements which give the best of these events their unique character remain important when local festivals are more widely marketed. (In an extreme case – it has actually happened – being prepared to restrict the marketing when that character is at risk of being impaired).
- Identifying aspects for development if cultural tourism is to be a serious economic contributor: (including an appraisal of the variety and standards of accommodation).
- Devising inclusive packages, offering accommodation, travel, and visits to other cultural venues in the area.

Potential partners:

- Penwith District Council*
- Penwith Festivals Partnership
- Penwith Tourism Action Group
- Golowan Festival Committee
- Newlyn Fish Festival Committee
- Newlyn Harbour Lights Association
- Mousehole Harbour Lights Association
- Old Cornwall Societies
- Churches Together
- Hotels and Guest Houses Association
- First Great Western
- Cornwall Tourist Board
- Cornwall Arts Marketing
- Newlyn Arts Festival

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**Conclusion: the choices before us**

The cultural life of Penzance and its hinterland is, in many ways, remarkable for a community of this size. That said, our task over the next twenty years is to make it better still, in range, in quality, and in its
relevance to people’s lives. That means helping local cultural undertakings to grow stronger, and securing the resources which they need. Funding, in particular, is going to be in short supply. From that, and from the constraints imposed by sustainability, it follows that the future of our cultural life together will be about making choices. It is not the business of this document to determine those choices. Rather, we have tried to show what they will be like, and to describe some of the conditions for their resolution. These are some of the points which emerge most clearly:

- Cultural life in the Penzance area is, and will properly remain, plural and diverse, deriving from and enriched by many different kinds of experience.
- The choices and decisions which it is likely to demand will therefore be complex. They will call for balance and compromise, often between strongly-held preferences.
- Limited resources will mean that the many (and often urgent) projects which our current cultural state demands have to be ranked in order of priority. The effects of this can be mitigated by favouring proposals that can address several needs at once. This also makes sense in terms of sustainability.
- There will be a need to choose between two broad strategies: creating new cultural spaces and promoting activities within them, or developing the activities first, and then pressing their demands for new spaces. The latter may well seem less hazardous, but the choice is there for Penzance to make.
- It will also be important to bring cultural facilities and activities close to where people are: to Penzance, rather than further up the county, and within Penzance, creatively to all areas.
- Preserving heritage and expressing a Cornish identity are important cultural goals, but their effect in any overall strategy depends on the quality of thought with which they are pursued.
- In the light of all this, the relative inattention to strengthening institutions of intellectual culture in Penzance needs to be corrected at an early stage.
- Neither the District or the County Council, given their obligations to other localities, can be expected to see it as their role to make this last item a priority. Penzance, itself, however, could well make a different assessment.

It is very much to be hoped, then, that the Theme Delivery Group on Culture, Heritage and Identity will devise and drive a cultural strategy specifically for Penzance that will make it possible, over time, to realize most of the objectives put forward in this chapter. The potential partners: virtually all those organizations identified throughout this Theme.

Considerations for the Theme Delivery Group will include:

- Defining a membership that will reflect the unusually wide constituency of interests in this range of topics, but will also be democratically accountable.
- The emphases on diversity, balance and compromise, priorities, and multi-purpose solutions, highlighted elsewhere in this chapter.
- Creating and sustaining a shared range of cultural experiences across the area, from the most prosperous parts to the most deprived.
- Preserving heritage and expressing a Cornish identity as aspects of the self-awareness of a living community, not as relics of a lost past.
As a priority, seriously strengthening local institutions of intellectual culture.

Finding ways to articulate these concerns within a perspective specific to Penzance.

Avoiding that loss of initial momentum which has dogged so many cultural enterprises here in the past. A timetable might help.