Participation in arts and culture makes communities feel safer and stronger, adds to health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation¹, but funding cuts are a significant threat to culture and leisure activities, particularly in the third sector.

Cultural and recreational activities can help people access the natural environment through healthy lifestyles. Sport is evidenced to result in significant savings to health costs and yet there are concerns that many of Dorset’s young people are physically inactive.

**Box 1: Health and wellbeing value**

- Arts and cultural intervention can have a positive impact on specific health conditions such as dementia, Parkinson’s and depression¹.

- The value of sport for savings to health is £147.8 million per annum in Dorset³.

- Levels of wellbeing are generally reported to be higher amongst those with higher arts and culture engagement⁵.

- Students who study art subjects are more employable and more likely to stay in employment than graduates from other disciplines¹ and children from low income families who take part in arts at school are three times more likely to get a degree¹.

- Overall 77% of people surveyed agree that access to cultural activities helps to make Dorset a better place to live and that engagement in cultural activities contributes to an improved quality of life⁶.

Sources

1 Create, Arts Council England, December 2015
2 Citizens Panel April 2009 Survey, Dorset County Council
Box 2: Economic Value

- 65% of Dorset’s 14yrs+ population does not regularly participate in sport. The cost of physical inactivity is over £8.4 million and rising in Dorset\(^3\).
- The total direct economic value of sport to Dorset is £118.1 million per annum\(^2\).
- The value of sport volunteering is £55.5 million per annum in Dorset\(^3\).
- The value of Creative Industries is about £425 million per annum in the Dorset LEP area\(^4\). GVA of the Creative Industries increased by 3.6 per cent between 2014 and 2015 in the UK\(^5\).
- The number of businesses in the Creative Industries in Dorset has been growing rapidly. Between 2010 and 2017 there has been a 29% increase, compared to 9% for all industries\(^5\).
- The Creative Economy has grown by a quarter since 2010, at a rate faster than the whole of the UK economy, which grew 17.4 per cent\(^5\).
- For every £1 invested in the arts by the county council there is a return of £4 secured in external investment into the county.

What are we doing about it?

Leisure centres provide affordable access to exercise classes, gym equipment, sports facilities and swimming. There are currently 18 in Dorset, overseen by local authorities. By using public money in this way, demand for expensive health interventions can reduce as the public stay fit and healthy both physically and mentally.

The councils in Dorset support local sports clubs through providing advice such as how to set up a club, fund it, and train staff. Sometimes grants are available to cover some of the costs.

The county council supports local events such as the IRONMAN triathlon which came to Weymouth in 2016 and 2017 with plans for an event in 2018. Over the year, visits to Dorset by the entrants and their supporters adds more than £1 million to the local economy.

Community facilities such as skate parks and public green spaces, which may have outdoor gym equipment, are other examples of councils providing leisure facilities for public use.

The county council recognises the benefits that arts and culture bring to people, including improved health and wellbeing, as well as economic gains. The council supports the arts and culture by providing free access to books, learning and local history via libraries and also financial support for the Arts Development Company. Work is currently taking place on a three year business and creative industries growth project with the Dorset Growth Hub called Culture+. This has been funded by the EU with a further £482,000 from Arts Council England.

Sources

3 Sport England Local Sport Profile, 2015/16
4 aGVA dataset from Annual Business Survey 2014, ONS
5 DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates, August 2016, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
6 UK Businesses 2017, Local Units, ONS, 2015

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