

B&NES One Shared Vision – Arts & Culture

Good evening everyone and thank you for allowing me to speak to you tonight.

I'm here to raise my concerns about the lack of arts and cultural representation in the B&NES One Shared Vision consultation, and the stories included therein.

Ever since the decimation of the Arts Development department and scathing cuts by the previous administration; arts and culture in Bath has lacked a unified voice within the city. We have a creative and cultural strategy which is sat on a shelf somewhere gathering dust – yet when we apply for funding, we're told we should be referencing it. The city needs a collective vision for the arts and whereas I was never a fan of the narrow vision of this document, the city does need an updated and future-looking cultural and creative strategy which reflects the city today.

Throughout lockdown, artists from all art forms have kept people entertained with live streams of music, theatre, comedy, poetry, storytelling, dance... the list is endless. Artists have done this although many of them have fallen through the Government's emergency funding gaps. We watched, as overnight our careers were ripped away. We were told to retrain. To get proper jobs.

I don't need to prove the economic benefits of the arts – the point has been proven time and time again. But, if Bath's arts and cultural scene thrives so do the many businesses that surround them and the night-time offer to tourists is greatly enhanced.

How many people's mental health benefitted from exposure to the arts during lockdown? The benefits of arts and culture on people's health and wellbeing is well documented and widely known.

In Bath we're very good at looking at the past. At our heritage. But what is often ignored is the part that arts and culture played in our history. From performances in the Roman theatre (believed to be somewhere underneath the Mineral Water Hospital). To the mystery and morality plays that were performed in St Michaels Without. The travelling players that visited here, including Shakespeare's company (although perhaps not Shakespeare himself). To the many different theatres and performance venues that thrived in the time of Beau Nash. The famous bands that toured here in the sixties and seventies. The many street performers and buskers. All the amateur theatre companies, comedians, musicians, poets, storytellers and

dancers who live and work here today. And then all of our brilliant festivals and events.

So why, in a post-covid vision of Bath, is there no mention of arts and culture?

You've declared a climate emergency – well I'm declaring an arts and culture emergency. Arts and culture should be at the heart of any vision for the city going forwards.

A vision of Bath that ignores all of this, is a vision of a city which is a shadow of its former self. A city without a heart.

I know that you cannot help the arts financially, but going forwards I urge you to include them in economic regeneration plans for the city. Arts and culture's value cannot be defined only in monetary terms but for the enrichment of life it brings to thousands of residents and cultural tourists each year.

Thank you for your time & I'm happy to take any questions.