



## Sheffield Visual Arts Group

### Special Edition

### Culture Strategy Update.

March 2024

"Sheffield Visual Arts Group would like to draw to your attention that Sheffield City Council is presently consulting the general public about the proposed new Cultural Strategy

If you would like to contribute please do so via "Have your Say" on the SCC website:

<https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/culture-strategy>

At the time of writing we do not have precise dates but know that this opportunity should be available during March. We would be very grateful if you were able to make a contribution.

Here is our own SVAG statement about the Cultural Strategy.

### **"Sheffield Visual Arts Group and Sheffield's Cultural Strategy**

Sheffield Visual Arts Group (SVAG) welcomes the city's public consultation on a cultural strategy and having the opportunity to contribute. Ideally, we would like to see the following in any strategy adopted.

N.B. We have added examples of what SVAG has been working on to illustrate our group's activities in raising awareness of the significance of the visual arts.

#### **Vision, aligned locally, regionally and nationally.**

SVAG would like a coherent, joined up, ambitious yet realistic strategy to be adopted. SVAG has always pushed for a city arts and culture strategy which would afford a sense of direction for future developments. We recognise culture and the arts can attract inward investment and tourism and feel that new initiatives should fit alongside existing city, regional and national planned projects and strategies .

Ideally we would like a cultural hub/arts centre to be the physical embodiment of the strategy. This would additionally maximise use of a large art archive the contents of which are currently not sufficiently seen.

## **Attention to civic pride and local identity.**

Any strategy should be rooted in what Sheffielders value and want to celebrate - in what makes the city special and differentiates it from other cities.

SVAG came into being in 2011 when there was a danger of the city losing the J. G. Graves building and it has subsequently encouraged wider ownership of cultural heritage through a variety of initiatives e.g. workshops, study days, working with schools and local artists.

We have recently, together with our partner, Wessex Archaeology and using generous local volunteers, recorded and mapped public art works in the city. We have also celebrated the city's ephemeral Street Art. We have organised public art trails and workshops in collaboration with Sheffield Museums and Art Galleries, Wessex Archaeology and enthusiastic members of the public.

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## **Public Participation**

SVAG hopes that the Culture Strategy adopted by S.C.C. will be a "People's Strategy" and involve the public at every opportunity. Not just during consultation but in review, evaluation etc. Participation is crucial to a sense of ownership.

The Culture Strategy needs to be seen alongside equality and transport policies if the issues of access and the participation gap are to be addressed.

Part of SVAG's aim has been the promotion of arts and culture for all in order to enhance wellbeing, inclusivity, diversity, and community cohesion. We have worked collaboratively with diverse organisations towards this end and network with grass roots individuals and groups, for example, Ignite Imaginations, U3A, Sheffield Printmakers, J.U.H.S. and Family Choice.

We have begun to raise public awareness of SVAG and its work in relation to a culture strategy through talks to local community groups, our online newsletters and general networking.

Recognising that arts and culture funding is but one claim on stretched council budgets, SVAG continues to engage with and support SCC through meetings with officers and councillors and the CEO of Sheffield Museums and Galleries.

## **Future Planning**

SVAG would like to see a Culture Strategy which realistically looks forward, enabling a positive, vibrant environment for practitioners and the public alike. The resource implications of future projects should be clear and transparent. The proposed Culture Strategy should be seen in conjunction with the Heritage Strategy, Transport, Equality and other strategies and form part of a unified, holistic and visionary approach to the future development of Sheffield.

As a group we are particularly interested in: the use and development of publicly owned space and buildings; the commissioning of new work; ticketing policies and improving access to more, affordable, performance and exhibition space. The future of the Graves

Gallery building is a major concern and we welcome the planned feasibility study, the results of which should be shared with the public.

SVAG hopes that its collaborative work with Wessex Archaeology and other agencies will continue and that future study days will help to keep alive the debate around all these issues.

SVAG looks forward to the evolution of a new culture of collaboration and transparency in this sector in Sheffield where all stakeholders feel valued and included in strategy development and implementation.”

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Sheffield Visual Arts Group (SVAG) campaigns to promote and celebrate Sheffield’s vibrant and outstanding visual arts at a regional and national level.

The City of Sheffield owns an internationally recognised collection of 20th-century paintings and works on paper, as well as a huge array of other treasures. We want to improve access to this vibrant collection.

Our group would like the economic and cultural importance of Sheffield’s extraordinary art to be reflected in local and national policymaking, and ultimately for Sheffield to have the pioneering cultural centre for the arts which it deserves.

New members are always welcome at our monthly meetings, for more information about SVAG and our objectives: [www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.co.uk/our-aims](http://www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.co.uk/our-aims)

**Note: the next full edition of the newsletter will be available in May.**